

Death *the* World

Starr Hoyt Nichols



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BREATH OF THE WORLD

BY
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CRITICS

Kind friends, whose words of praise so free
Have been my solace midst of careless men,
Enkindling heart and brain, when else my pen
Had wandered idly from sweet verse, here see
The work your favor wrings afresh from me!
And if a late repentance ripens when
These numbers you peruse, be kind again,
For now too late your lashes I should flee.
A wonder 't were, if guides such as ye are,
Trained in good books and words arranged with art,
Should be quite wrong, and all your subtle care
Did but misfit you to play well your part;
So, I, the happy subject of your praise,
Once more adventure into public gaze.

THE SONNET .

The sonnet is a wine-cup whence should rise
Aromas fine and delicate as those
Of choice Vesuvian vintage named for woes
Of sad Gethsemane, that banish sighs;
Or it may be a clarion's voice that cries
In thrilling tones a battle 'gainst man's foes,
Or a slim flute's clear tone that comes and goes
Where gladness fills the air with melodies;
Or it may be love's royal, lotus flower
Expanding in full splendor when fresh youth,
Glowing with passion's fervor, crowns the hour
Which has no rival in our life forsooth;
Or it may be the hearse where starkly lies
Life's glory or love's fatal sacrifice.



Breath of the World



THE GATES OF THE CENTURY

As some foot-weary caravan from the East
Heavy with gems and ivories and all rare,
Rich orient plunder that men love to share,
Nearing a mighty city finds increased
The highway throng and press of laden beast,
So these our century's closing years, that bear
Upon their camels costliest bales, and fare
Towards portals new, where they shall be released,
Approach a mightier age whose promise large
Already crowds the ways of human hope
With shadowy figures of a richer charge
Than any past held in its straitened scope.
The gate that on the illustrious century closes
Opes on the new as June on budding roses.

COLUMBUS

What lion-heart throbbed in Columbus' breast
That he should launch slim ships to beat his way
O'er foaming leagues of never-travelled sea
That flashed down the illimitable west!
Who but a dreamer with a prophet's zest
Would dare to seek a world beyond all ken,
Possessed of fairy monsters and strange men,
Nor turn his rudder till was reached his quest?
But when upon gray ocean's vacant ring
A low green isle with plummy palm-trees shone,
What wonder that his men knelt worshipping
To crown the bravest triumph ever won!
And what glad thoughts rose in his valiant soul,
Seeing his dream there on the billows' roll!

SAN SALVADOR

An isle he saw, he gave what lay behind:
Two continents that lent worn Europe space
For its sad people to refresh their race,
And snatch their fortunes from the monarchs blind,
Whose fumbling made earth wretched for mankind;
Lands where men free might laugh with happiness
And find releases in the sunnier face
And motley thinking of the common mind.
Would he had waked but for one hour to hear
The bugle-call of our democracy
That bade all quarters of the peopled sphere
To send confederate squadrons o'er the sea
In honor of his matchless deed! And raise
To him as to a god their psalm of praise.

INGRATITUDE

What more pathetic figure hath old time
Etched in amid his stored miseries
Than this Columbus victim'd to mean spies,
Chained in his cabin, charged with traitorous crime?
But as the majesty of Lear sublime
Discrowned, dis-kingdomed, raving to foul skies,
Yet "every inch a king" doth still arise
And no less princely than in sceptred prime,
So shows this sailor, this "high admiral" proud,
While bigots rage and carping courtiers prate,
Disowned of craven king and fickle crowd,
With manly courage mid his foes elate;
While we of alien blood—his heirs—conspire
To arch the centuries with his name—in fire.

THE COLUMBUS PARADE—1893

Huge warships of all nations side by side,
Oarless and sailless, heedless of the breeze
Drive their colossal prows with conquering ease
Against the thrusting of an adverse tide;
And mid them three curved caravels—the pride
Of bold Columbus, when he clove the seas,
The windy sport of what storm-gods might please,
Seeking strange ports where keel did never ride.
Yet these leviathans are proud to dip
Their bright flags to the pigmy counterpart
Of his slight ships; and from the flame-wreathed lip
Of thundering cannon cheer his dauntless heart.
Greater than Cæsar's fortunes carried well
The fragile oak of Christopher's caravel.

HENRY HUDSON

Bluff Henry Hudson,—his red-letter day,—
Swung his good ship inside the scythe-like curve
That bids the green-surgèd Neptune chafe and swerve,
Outside the wavelets of Manhattan Bay;
The uncharted Narrows saw his tall sails sway;
Awed red-men, deeming their great Manitou
With benedictions came, gave welcome true;
Alas for them! What fatal futures lay
Within that towering cruiser's oaken sides!
For the old sea-dog drove his urgent prow
'Twixt pillared palisades until the tides
Gave wave unsalted foaming at his bow;
So wrote his sailor name in water sure,
But writing famous long as streams endure.

ABORIGINES

How long tall Indians roamed this land and here
The slim buck took to wife the tawny squaw,
Bred red papposes as his cubs a bear,
And reared them on the yield of stream and shaw:
Dim centuries fled; aloft gray eagles screamed,
Panther and wolf his wigwam-camp beset;
Oft shrilled he war-whoops where his foemen dreamed,
Oft gravely puffed the peace-wreathed calumet.
In frescoed skin he prowled to woo or war;
Trimmed his lithe form with scalps and feathers gay;
With his beast-totem did the white-birch scar,
And like the wood-fowl threw his years away;
Ungrudging nature nursed his untaught brood
Through what millenniums of waste solitude?

1695

His dusky aboriginals, two thousand told
Their sombre sachem, chief of Pequot braves,
Camped in a rude stockade, where Indian graves
Now fill all ground still theirs by title old;
For them did stout John Mason, warrior bold
Of Plymouth colony, march forth to slay
One Sabbath afternoon; and ere the day
Had faded in December's twilight cold,
That ancient tribe lay dead around their fires—
Buck, squaw, pappoose—one gory heap of slain;
While pious Puritans—grim warrior-quires—
Raised to their God a psalm of grateful strain;
Scarce lived a Pequot evermore to tell
That here his fierce forefathers fighting fell.

TECUMSEH

The roaming savages in wigwams free
Disclosed no sachem of a larger mold
Than grand Tecumseh, whose shrewd brain enrolled
Red nations five in one confederacy.
What worsened history had white settlers seen,
Had this red captain spread his snares what time
At wintry Plymouth mid the frosty rime
Pilgrims were landing from the salt sea green!
Or when his Puritans Miles Standish led
In scanty files against their stalwart foes,
How had their lean ranks fared, had this clear head
Ambushed his braves behind the forest rows?
But when he rose to halt his people's fate,
Pathetic fortune could but cry "Too late!"

PALE-FACE AND RED-SKIN

What goblin-haunted forests faced the band
That first explored our green woods' mysteries!
Hunting fierce clans of hunting savages,
Poor painted tribes! They little could understand
Save chase of wildings through the bushy land;
So little knew that nature scorned their wise,
With plague and famine slew their young like flies,
And smote their witless braves with hasty hand.
Now is their heritage a hive of men
Who axe in hand make echoing forests shake;
Who run the plough-share through the foxes' den
And plant great factories where crawled the snake.
Was it a wrong the idling land to fill
With lordlier men against the red-man's will?

COTTON MATHER

Beneath the pomp and periwig of him
Perchance a heart of common flesh did beat
Whose throbs sent living blood to hands and feet,
Lending continuance to life and limb.
But what a guise of man, both vain and grim,
Who preached Christ's gospel with salvation sweet,
Yet at the dreadful gallows raged with heat
Lest some poor witch be spared at pity's whim.
So far did superstition mar this man
That, gentleman, scholar, Christian, as times went,
He laid upon his day a murderous ban
And better souls than his to Tophet sent.
Men praised his parts—would he had found a place
In his learned ignorance for human grace!

JONATHAN EDWARDS

A strong, sweet nature curdled in its prime
By surly doctrines, whose hysteric fear
Raising the ghosts of uncommitted crime,
Jarred the fine balance of his reason clear;
His pure face felt the scorch of flaming hell,
He heard lost souls in ruthless torture rave;
Saw mid eternal torments doomed to dwell
Myriads of misbelievers good and brave.
Fair earth became to him a realm accurst
God-harried for dead Adam's sin of yore,
A guilty planet earning still the worst
Of cruel punishments reserved in store,
And man's will hand-cuffed to God's stern decrees
Helped him to hell through sin's unhealed disease.

RIP VAN WINKLE

Old Rip Van Winkle—so Dame Fortune spun—
Hath o'er the cloudy Catskills cast a spell,
Where thunders low to ghostly nine-pins swell,
And flits Rip's genius with his rusty gun,
As sketched by Irving, played by Jefferson.
A worthless creature fleeing the clamorous knell
Of his shrew's tongue, made haunted gorges tell
Of foaming flagons and the sleep he won.
This slipshod roysterer drifting down his day,
To dogs and children dearer than to great,
Who knew him for an idle castaway,
Hath with these solemn mountains linked his fate.
And busy ages still his romance cherish
With jovial memories, letting saints' names perish.

ROUSSEAU

The shrewd world-spirit on its jaunt through time
Puts up in many a curious tenement
Forlorn or goodly, comic or sublime,
Yet ne'er complains however poor its tent.
'T is ugly Socrates, Mahomet mean,
Or hermit Peter, Cromwell regicide,
Coarse Luther, churl Napoleon, Darwin keen,
Or our rail-splitter Lincoln, erst decried.
So once he housed in French Rousseau, a strange,
Disreputable genius, rare of wit,
Whose vibrant words rang in a day of change,
Knelling the doom of aristocracies unfit.
Kings, nobles, priests by his explosive thought
Blown into fragments to harsh ending brought.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

As when from out a block of marble rude
By Greek art chiselled steps a god sublime,
Glorious in feature, form, and attitude,
Immortal mid the wrecks of blighting time,
So from rough quarries of humanity
By great times sculptured Washington stood forth
Of godlike mold and godlike soul to be
A rare high wonder of pure human worth;
And as o'er Athens towered the form divine
Of helmed Athena, guardian of the state,
Lifting her spear and buckler o'er the shrine
Where shone her face in light immaculate,
So stately Washington radiant and alone
Stands guardian genius of his land—our own.

LAFAYETTE

A high-born Gaul, whose heart beat warm for man,
Fired with young zeal 'gainst immemorial wrongs,
Heard our great revolution's bell and ran
With knightly sword to join our farmer throngs;
A lordly ease ungrudged he left, since he
Adored the trinity of that time's grace,
"Liberty, equality, fraternity,"
More than all luxury that kept men base;
So won our hearts and made forever dear
His generous France to all Americans,
Sister republics linked across the mere
By his betrothal in the holiest bans;
Nor shall day dawn that shall not join in one
Brave Lafayette and our grave Washington.

BEN FRANKLIN

Most prying artisan of patient time,
Philosopher of hearth and farm and mart,
Gay humorist of common sense sublime,
Franklin naught prized or praised from men apart;
Yet soared his fancy through the upper skies
To pluck Jove's thunder from his high command;
He looked at nature with such fearless eyes,
She smiled and gave the lightning to his hand.
Palace and salon vied to laud his name;
Himself superior by his mien and mind
Now lends their gilded court his lease of fame,
To give a halo to its frivolous kind.
To nature close as glove to hand was he,
Who mid earth's wisest gave him place to be.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

A fairy changeling, Merlin's later son,
Graceful in mien, with magic gift of speech,
Lit on our coasts one morn, heaven-sent to teach
Our sagest statesmen wisdom; there was none
But with winged Mercury's eloquence he won,
And held amazed at the scarce-rivalled reach
Of his ethereal genius; still with each
He seemed the first whatever race was run;
He took men's thoughts in his with subtle wit
To soothe the jealous, bind the fractious fast,
The scattered links of feeble states to knit
To one firm empire matched with time to last;
Our chain of union welded he so well
That time nor rage could rend his powerful spell.

THOMAS PAINE

As a white statue buried in the slime
Of yellow Tiber, when restored to day
Comes forth discolored from its bed of clay,
Nor ever loses traces of the grime;
So may a great name from a turbid time
Emerge distained by slander's muddy spray
That naught can show its pristine purity,
Though spotless 't were as any babe of crime.
Tom Paine was such, whose bright-eyed genius clear
Hailed by the greatest of his mighty age
Shone like a star o'er either hemisphere
Till lies befouled its glorious embassy;
Then men forgot his work in freedom's cause
When it lay fainting 'neath the lion's claws.

JEFFERSON

As a bold swimmer plunging in the sea,
With rapture hears its tumbling billows clash,
And gives his body to them fearlessly,
Fearing no evil from such playmates rash,
So heard our Jefferson the roaring surge
Of wild democracy as swelling high
It thundered forward eager to submerge
The ancient dunes of aristocracy.
He gave his fortunes to its boisterous play,
Where colder statesmen shrank the invading tide;
Glad as a boy he left the sheltered bay
To breast the greater ocean's lift outside.
So his name shines forever in the van
Of those who made the state American.

ETHAN ALLEN

When Ethan Allen with stout soldiers few
Before Ticonderoga's lonely fort
Stood on a misty morning with the port
Of one prepared to make a brave foe rue
His vain defence, what triumph did ensue!
His summons, "Yield in great Jehovah's name
And of the Continental Congress," came
Like Jove's command to Britain's startled crew;
Joyous our colonies the conquest hailed;
Success by rashness brought to such quick birth,
And lifting foes on mirth's light spear impaled,
Gave place for deathless laughter to dull earth;
Such daring may from any fireside spring
Where freedom has the boys in nourishing.

ISRAEL PUTNAM

When at his plough "Old Put" heard war's shrill call,
He left his gear within the furrow there,
Rode off his horse to get him powder and ball,
That for his country he might do and dare;
And as the grizzled wolf in his rock den
In youth he bearded, so he faced the foe
Oblivious to each deadly peril when
Compatriots rose to work oppressors' woe;
But when at Bunker Hill his soldiers ran,
Against those fugitives this churchman swore,
And though defeated won as valor can
The laurel crown which victors ever wore;
And in our annals never shall his name
Fail from the roll call of the loved of fame.

HALE AND ANDRÉ

Two victims of red war's rapacious will,
Both young, devoted, to their colors true,
One in red coat, the other in gray-blue,
Were to a gibbet hung; both noble still;
Two spies, whom comrades loved as void of ill.
Their costly sacrifice two nations rue,
Which then with stupid hate each other slew,
But now full bumpers to old foemen fill.
What baleful Fury deaf to coming woes
Hurls men to slaughter 'neath the sunshine sweet,
Their cherished comrades now t' assault as foes
Whom soon as friends once more they gladly greet?
But those brave souls in dewy youth once slain
What toast or smile restores them youth again?

PAUL JONES

Was ever heard of rasher mariner
Than stout Paul Jones who harried the English coast
With fearless sails, and smothered England's boast
In exploits that made quake the heart of her?
How swore scared squires in hall and field! What stir
Uproused all parts, as, flitting like a ghost
From bight to bight, his ship appeared a host,
And squads were drilled to halt this visitor!
Rocks, tempests, nor the thundering foes' broadsides,
Rent masts nor splintering bulkheads could him fright;
Had England been but anchored on her tides
He would have cut her cables and, despite
Her rage, have towed her o'er the Atlantic wide
A helpless captive to his patriot pride.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

A haughty, rash, and jealous soul, whose fire
Blazed bright amid the battle's hot affray,
Quick to resent rebuke time would unsay,
Caught at revenge to sate his sudden ire;
Home, country, friends he tossed upon the pyre
Of hasty wrath, and ardent to betray
Nailed his name high with traitors gone astray,
Trampling its early splendor in the mire.
'T were better far bright honor not to know,
Ne'er to have worn the wreaths of happy praise,
Than having worn to fall to depths so low
That all men curse whom once they crowned with bays;
So smirched is Arnold's name we blush that one
Born to our land should earn such malison.

WEBSTER

Great-souled defender of the heritage
Our fathers left, was Webster eloquent,
Whose clarion voice, against whatever meant
Disunion's madness, rang in noble rage.
As with Jove's grandeur, how did he engage
The listening Senate! Straining mortal art
With full outpourings of his patriot heart,
Secession's awful ruin to presage.
How was the horror of his prescient fears
O'ertopped, when farm and city knew
War's bloody havoc and fast-falling tears,
The curse of faction's blind, infuriate crew!
But now restored, "full high advanced," we see
The flag his words had matched in majesty.

HENRY CLAY

A rich, magnetic voice whose echoes great
Drift down dim years with ever lessening swell,
Like dying throbs of some far mountain bell,
Is Clay to us, who once could dominate
Attending ears like a superior fate;
For on his times his tones persuasive fell
With generous burden that would hate dispel,
And hearts anew to country consecrate;
His life into our commonwealth was wrought
As one who could not stoop to projects base;
The Union's glory was his foremost thought;
His honor stainless as a planet's face;
A modern Bayard whom no tales decry
Lives in his record of fine chivalry.

JOHN C. CALHOUN

As is a jangling bell in some sole tower
That clangs forever one discordant note
For feasts, or fasts, or fires, with brazen throat,
So was Calhoun reiterate every hour
Wrangling for slavery and secession sour,
With the stale tedium of a parrot's rote,
While freedom's radiant crest he ever smote
With shameless blows as genius lent him power.
His clangorous tocsin ringing loud and late
Called out an angry mob for slavery's guard,
And marshalled armies to the fierce debate
Of bloody fields that Union deeply marred.
Marius mid Carthage's ruins hotly sped
Is Calhoun's symbol mid his slaveries dead.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

Most dainty lady, in whose gentle mind
Unnumbered flowers as by a wayside sprang,
Whose frolic fancy in such gay notes sang
As birdlings warble by no bars confined,
What spirit touched thy sportiveness so kind
To blow a warrior's trumpet till it rang
A tingling challenge to the lawless gang
That bullied all the land the slave to bind?
No sweeter nature ever found its rôle
The tenderest thoughts with war-gear to enlase,
And like Jeanne d'Arc as 't were a sword to wield
With men-at-arms upon the clashing field,
And still to walk with woman's fragrant grace,
A heroine in act, a saint in soul.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

What gentleness suffused the thoughtful soul
Of our one martyred President, who led,
Without a word of rancorous import said,
Mar's blood-stained armies towards the statesman's goal;
No page he wrote that love could not extol,
Nor any act allowed of malice bred
That might in memory rankle, when was dead
The frantic strife, and reason resumed control.
His mildness brought as heritage to us
Such brothers' unity as ne'er before
Knit hostile States in love; his generous
Spirit glows like a shrine that men adore;
And the foul bullet to his kind heart sent
With deepest rue o'erbroods our continent.

GENERAL GRANT

When war red-handed drew his biting sword,
And hung revolvers to his dreadful belt,
A modest soldier who for duty felt
Stood forth at his loved country's earliest word;
Not dreaming that his fight should be adored
By half the continent, such blows he dealt
That beaten foemen to his valor knelt
Till every hostile flag to him was lowered;
So rose he to the top of our young world;
And grateful countrymen did more augment
His praise, when peace her white flag had unfurled,
And civic garlands with his war-wreaths blent;
Patriot, warrior, statesman, well was won
His lofty place—our nation's second son.

ROBERT E. LEE

A courteous soul of ancient, knightly strain
Hearing fierce bugles blow their bitter breath
Spurred instant forth to meet the ravening death,
Following bright honor through the bloody rain;
What ringing battles did his genius gain!
But still his squadrons melted till he saith,
"Some god mine enemy replenisheth,
'T were butchery to prolong the fight in vain."
So like a soldier to a soldier gave
His good sword up and from war's ranks retired;
Not crowned with victor's laurels, yet a brave
Stout captain whom stern duty had inspired;
And well content within his home did see
In his defeat a larger victory.

EDISON

This genius of late times in workman's guise
Swings wide the gate of nature's dark domain,
And entering like her sovereign wise of brain
Summons the secrets from their mysteries;
And they bow down before him, to his eyes
All nude, like maidens of some slaver's train,
Whom this strong lord mechanic doth constrain
To serve his mandate ever sane and wise.
His wizardry distils new spells each day;
Bids light to be and forthwith there is light;
Man's voice he prints or carries leagues away,
And drives strong engines to a swifter flight;
Bright Ariel-Nature whispers in his ear
Her latest news from atomy and sphere.

WATT

More than Columbus or Napoleon, did
Watt change the antique world, inventor shrewd!
When by the fireside he did inly brood
On the slight lifting of a kettle's lid.
Napoleon bridled Europe and bestrid
Its kingdoms like a war-god; for what good?
Watt's thought had power that knew no lassitude
And it went forth to do what men should bid.
Columbus gave new worlds but left weak man
Enslaved to drudgery's millennial blight:
Watt wheedled steam, that stout barbarian,
To slave for slaves with never-tiring might:
Watt tames Columbus' savage continents,
Napoleon's hosts dismantles like his tents.

NAPOLEON

I

A brigand from rough Corsica astray,
His blood with wild vendetta-flame afire,
Greedy, remorseless, and a ready liar,
Found genius his to do what genius may;
Strange times lent Frenchmen for his daring play
To train as bandits with him, in his hire;
The twain half-frenzied with war's fell desire
Struck hands to raid rich Europe's empires gray.
He fluttered armies as an eagle crows;
Crowned kings he collared, kingdoms stole and sold;
And like a cracksman plundered as he chose
Pictures and statues, bronzes, jewels, gold;
Nobles and princes he as grooms abused,
A royal palace like a trooper used.

II

Lonely, as 'mid great Alpine peaks alone
The Matterhorn its elf-hewn grandeur rears
Remote from rivals, or companion peers
To match its snow-wreathed cliffs of sculptured stone,
Napoleon stood apart with comrade none;
A frowning grandeur fronting cruel years,
Aloof from sympathies of smiles or tears,
While on men's skulls he raised his dreadful throne.
His genius, like the mountain's fondled storms
Laced with fierce lightnings shot toward field and town,
That bore unsparing terrors in all forms
To blast men's lives where he might win renown;
Yet for that genius men condone his ill,
Since greater never did a man's place fill.

F. D. MAURICE

Well-wishing scholar, whose embarrassed mind,
Forever beat the bush with throbbing heart,
In hopes the modern hares of thought to start
Mid ancient tomes! How long with thee purblind
Had I my way mid folk-lore tales to wind,
Exploring tombs with hieroglyphs inscribed
By ignorance, of olden times the bride,
Yet wert thou noble though to creeds confined!
Now, issued into breezy realms where life
Blows clarion challenges as bugle clear,
My blood stirred by the trumpets of man's strife,
Bounds with the conflict for things real and near.
Thy books seem but as spiders' wandering threads
Hung with bright morning dew upon the meads.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Nature's gross frame betrays "a tendency
Not of ourselves that makes for righteousness,"
Cries brooding Arnold ranging far and nigh
For moral raiment man's nude limbs to dress;
Yet to this dreamer did no light reveal
What earthly plant could furnish fibre tough
To weave a robe shot through with forms ideal,
And drape crass, bestial man with grace enough.
So never in his 'plaining hours gave heed
To what grew rankest round his spurning feet,
The plant which always he mistook for weed—
Material wealth, for every vesture meet.
Art, letters, science, law, and righteousness
Of wealth's gold thread are woven 'gainst man's distress.

CHARLES DARWIN

Deep student! Who to nature wert so true
That her still secrecy could never shirk
Thy patient study, what strange vistas new
And vast as time's dim corridors thy work
Has opened to our gaze! Revealing there
The thronged procession of the world's advance,
The method of her movement everywhere;
Firm laws that keep eternal dominance,
And how the little to the large may wax,
The simple to complex; how habits make
The tiger strenuous, and the serpent lax,
The eye to see, the facile hand to take,
A mind to solve the star-mist in its range
Or frame a stable state on fluent change.

GEORGE JONES, JOURNALIST

George Jones, cast in the antique mold
Of those to whom the state is more than self,
More than great power, or pleasure bought with pelf,
Was lately carried to the churchyard's fold
A guest of silence—with a name of gold.
For none could buy him, though one proffered wealth
Would pay an emperor's ransom, and with stealth
Enough to leave no trace of what was sold.
Long live the young republic where plain men
Keep honor undishonored stainlessly,
Holding that even a journal's public pen
For public duty should be held in fee.
If these be few, those few shall freedom wear
As heirloom jewels in her streaming hair.

MOZART

When rosy dawn breaks on the shadowy groves,
A wavering warble of all wild-fowl sweet
Out-streaming from the throats of feathered droves
Follows the dayspring o'er the growing wheat;
So Mozart broke above a sombre earth
In carols of heart-piercing melody,
Wherein all songs of fluttering birds found birth
For raptured men where never bird could be.
Ah! marvellous boy! with boy's untroubled heart,
And sportive frolic in life's lightsome play!
Who can but love thee for thy jocund art
That lends new charm to every mortal day?
Though in life's morn thou didst untimely die,
Still like the lark thou singest from the sky.

VERDI

From forth the teeming loins of nature strong,
Fresh as Apollo in young Grecian days
Springs Verdi's genius voicing harmonies
That charm all souls, assuaging half life's wrong.
He fills the air with an invisible throng
Of spirits chaunting love and rage and praise,
Till men enraptured fling him crowns of bays,
Transported by his many-burdened song.
An Orpheus of a golden race, whose strain
Has flowered in genius since the Roman prime,
From Cæsar to Napoleon, its grand brain
Has shaken the large-orbed world, surprising time.
Rare Verdi joins th' immortal band, his soul
Outpouring music that might stars control.

WAGNER

I

We love Niagara's thund'rous organ flow,
The breezy quires of spring-saluting birds,
Old ocean's stately marches without words,
And autumn's windy anthems loud or low;
All these in restless numbers swift or slow,
Or sweet or stormy, Wagner hath surprised
Into his scores as by old Pan advised,
Whose strains as with his dwarf-folk forges glow.
More human voices hath he also seized;
Love's rapture and despair, the hero's ire,
Youth's rippling gladness, hate unappeased,
With e'en the high God's misery on their pyre.
All mighty passions known to nature surge
Through his vast chords as were he demiurge.

II

As when athwart a boss of frowning cloud
The storm-god flings his lightning shafts of flame,
Till every fold with lurid seams is plowed,
And fire on water writes its foreign name,
So through his gravest score of harmony
Swift, meteor strains doth Wagner loosely fling,
Horns over strings tumultuously ply
In dazzling pyrotechnic wandering.
Awhile the erratic meteors wildly dart
Hither and yon, as did prime chaos near,
Then gathering to the central theme impart
An elemental grandeur large and clear;
Till, blended in th' o'erwhelming climax, all
Swell to such storm-bursts as might Thor enthrall.

ZENOBIA

Zenobia, queen of old Palmyra's gate,
About whose walls the desert flashed its sands,
Defied all-conquering Rome with martial bands
Of swordsmen, spearmen, horsemen, braving fate;
An airy maid, bright-eyed, of heart elate,
Since naught her beauty at the court withstands,
Thought the stout legionaries to her hands
Might be as wax not insubordinate;
Defeated, captive, chained she shamed the streets
In great Aurelian's haughty triumph led
A spectacle to Rome's proud populace;
Yet won a woman's victory to wed,
And mother Roman boys, while of her seats
Rude-mannered legions left but smallest trace.

PLATO

Great dreamer! who hath long enchanted souls
With rainbow visions from thy magic pen
And spells well-woven of things beyond all ken,
Art thou not chief among the human moles
That wander round thy cave? Upon thy scrolls
Is news of nothing that abides with men,
But only visions of what might have been
But is not. Yet so much thy dream unrolls
Of beauty, splendor, colored by witching speech,
That I too, willing captive, follow thee
Through the dim realms whereto thy wing doth reach
And revel in thy gorgeous pageantry.
But words of charm that paint the air with gold
To air resolve, when things their charm unfold.

FRANCIS BACON

A princely mind, at whose imperial court
Stood every knowledge of his eager day,
Garbed by his fancy in such choice array
As Iris might devise of graceful sort;
There wit and humor made increasing sport
And learning all her treasures would display,
And sweet-voiced wisdom ever would foresay
What weal from nature genius might extort;
Nature's great self he saw and bent his knee,
Put his fine hands in hers, as liegeman swore
To win to her allegiance times to be
By teaching men to love her fruitful lore;
Though not unstained in his perturbed career
Yet who of human kind may stand his peer?

SHAKESPEARE

What strange magician tutored Shakespeare's brain!
That statecraft like a statesman he should show;
History, philosophy, and faery know;
Of science, trades, and games be deeply fain;
Dry law and medicine as well explain,
Music dissect, with folk-lore overflow,
Strange tongues, far customs, ghost and witchcraft low,
The love of flowers, beasts, insects, birds, attain;
Scan men beside of every strain and state;
Dainty with maidens be, with harlots lewd;
With motley, rogue, sot, princes intimate,
That nothing mundane should his ken elude;
Bacon was other such, and there were twain,
Or Bacon lent the player his books and brain.

The Republic



THE REPUBLIC

Son of the youngest time with heart of oak,
With thews of steel and soul of flashing fire,
With will to reach the heart of thy desire
And bring a continent beneath thy yoke!
Thou art the Hercules of modern folk
Who hast already strangled serpents twain—
Rebellion, slavery, that sought in vain
To slay thee in thy cradle at a stroke!
Now more than labors twelve are in thy reins,
Since countless citizens of courage high
Pour from full hearts into thy swelling veins
The seething ferments of new liberty!
And thou, their demigod with unmailed hand
Dost guard them safe in thy unsoldiered land!

ELECTION

As fall the blossoms of fruit-bearing trees,
When May is ripening into beauteous June,
So fall white ballots written with the rune
Of freemen's choices, on November's knees;
Blossom and ballot fall, but neither flees
Except it leave behind a germ that soon
Shall grow to fruitage 'neath a future noon,
Or sweet or sour as wise and foolish please.
Well may we on the issue breathless wait!
Since the vast welfare of the nation hides
In the conclusions there enunciate,
Whose speechless word for many a moon abides.
Nor can the crown of king out-majesty
The uncrowned people choosing king that day.

THE UNION

As when outsails a fleet of gallant ships
From sheltered harbor to the ocean wide,
Of one great Admiral armored to the lips
In convoy, each self-steered though side by side;
So fared our thirteen States, one stately fleet
Forth on time's tossing waves to conquer fate;
Each for itself, from other each discrete,
Yet all to one command subordinate;
And as years fled, new cruisers joined their force,
Till fourfold multiplied their crowded sails,
One starry flag at peak, bound on one course,
Defied all peril of disparting gales;
Nor can the ocean of humanity
A braver sight on its broad waters see.

GENIUS OF THE UNITED STATES

Black-lettered scholars of old Europe's court
Are asking from us poet and architect,
Artist and what not genius of the olden sort,
Whose works adorn, though little they effect.
Aim we however at a greater work
Than a few men of genius to delight
The silk-clad folk that common labor shirk;
We would display a people trained aright
In clear sound knowledge of the world, and how
To win them goodly homes, live well, and give
Their tender children freedom from the woe
Of painful toils, while youth is theirs to live.
Nor Shakespeare's book our envy shall awaken
When wretchedness our commons hath forsaken.

SLAVERY

How curst a demon he that slyly sent
Among our freemen that envenomed snake
Of slavery spared for closer union's sake,
Though threatening union with dismemberment!
Like viper by the woodman warmed, it bent
Its hideous head, and hissed and struck until
Its poison did all veins with madness fill,
And the young state lay writhing, nearly spent.
But when the scaly horror fell away,
Men took new heart, though bathed in bloody sweat,
As flew their starry banner to the day
Though every fold with patriots' gore was wet.
Then from her fastness conquering freedom blew
Her tingling bugle to good men and true.

EMANCIPATION

'T was a dark annal in our nascent state
When North and South, old comrades dear and tried,
Mad with disputes no logic could decide
Closed in loud battle's crash infuriate;
Four million slaves, Afric's unfortunate,
Too imbecile themselves to draw a knife,
Though clanking squadrons marched to drum and fife,
Stirred irate pity though deferred till late;
Did ever such release outflash 'mid men,
Or follow clash of bayonet and sword,
As played electric through the gliding pen
That cancelled slaveries by a legal word?
Good Lincoln writing that one order takes
High place 'mid fame's immortal favorites.

PENSION LIST

"Republics are ungrateful," cried of old
The pensioners of kings who might bestow
Ribbons or titles, revenues of gold,
With princely lavishness for service low;
Little one recked, even if the guerdon came
From plundered subjects' store, content that he
Recipient was of such bright-feathered game,
Though poached from state preserves by royalty.
But we republicans, while showering less
On statesmen, captains, and our other great,
Rain more on undistinguished privateness,
Which else might suffer hardship desperate.
And each gives of his fruits of toil severe
With long-lived gratitude time cannot sere.

LITTLE ITALY

Columbus' countrymen, a swarthy host,
Forsake their homes of classic memory,
Their orange groves and cypress glooms, to be
Exiles more thriving on a foreign coast;
Columbia gains what Italy's need hath lost;
Sons of Rome's first republic at the knee
Of ours—the latest—swear allegiance free,
While brown eyes pledge our blue in cordial toast;
So doth the New World on the Old bestow
Release from penury's antique thrall of fears;
The Old sends blood, whose strain from long ago
Bred captains, statesmen, artists,—all men's peers;
Sooner will Italy for her loss feel rue
Than we be cankered by th' Italian dew.

AMALGAMATION

Strange races gather to our open shores,
Bringing all bloods that flow in human veins,
All forces that derive from human reins
To swell the vigor through our life that pours;
Matters it little of their different corps,
Their dirt and ignorance, poverty or banes,
Their strange religions or their alien strains—
A talisman we bear to heal all sores.
Not freedom, schools, nor equal rights, nor creeds
Work out our miracle; the wizard new
Is greating wealth that quiets growling needs,
And washes vileness as with morning dew.
Where wealth accumulates men ne'er decay,
Since wealth enlarges every human day.



Evolution



NATURA NATURANS

The undying tree of evolution grows
Like some huge banyan of far Indian lands
That mighty branches through broad heaven outthrows
And downward countless boles to earth remands;
For leaves and fruits it carries tribes of men
That flaunt their pride, then flutter off and die;
Races and empires bears awhile and then
Sheds them for others, careless how they lie;
The golden stars on its stretched boughs that hang
Ripen and rot, yet leave it hale and green,
Ne'er giving hint whence its first stirpling sprang
Or what its flourish may through eons mean;
The wind of time that in its foliage sighs
Breathes no word from its twin eternities.

EVOLUTION'S ORCHESTRA

A mighty diapason Nature plays
For ears attuned to her gigantic quires,
Where restless fickleness of theme and phrase
Express the vast caprice of her desires;
Her strings the multitudinous flora are
In sighing undertone; her reeds the animals,
Whose variant species through bold discords bear
Responsive chords of grand antiphonals.
With these at last the human score is blent,
Whose deep, dramatic passion of affairs,
Love, science, war, and government,
Sounds the loud horns keyed to immortal bars.
Strains both of demon and of angel then
Make clash and chorus of evolving men.

BRAIN

That artful matter which we count as dead
Steals forward hour by hour to higher form,
And, having sauntered on from ooze to worm,
Grown more ambitious makes itself a head
And vaults to thinking brain of quadruped;
Where fickle convolutions strangely scored
House wizardries in unexampled horde,
Such as were ne'er in other trenches bred;
Nor even then draws curb, but onward strains,
Improving types from lower to formulate;
Each gens of fish, bird, beast in turn disdains
And fashions man its present ultimate;
In him the atom scans the universe
And its deep secrets doth for tales rehearse.

RESEARCH

For ages with short tether men were fain
To potter round known hills and streams of earth,
And from wide travel cat-like did refrain,
Still dozing at the safe, paternal hearth;
Now would they ransack isle and continent,
Scale peaks, plough seas, map rivers, deserts, bights,
Forever busy, growling discontent,
From bright equators to long polar nights;
All nature's works have they in mind to scan,
Pierce the sphynx's secrets, harness force and ride,
Descry the flying comets' weight and span,
The cyclone bridle and the sea-tides guide;
Nor does one dream of reaching any end
Though time should eons to inquiry lend.

THE TALE OF YEARS

What lazy ages hath the beadsman Time
Taled on his rosary of years wherein were coached
Earth's forms from low to higher—a mounting rhyme—
Till the grave monkey's cousin had approached
To laughing man! On him time further waits
To give his wrangling clans from jars release,
Of blood-stained warriors make friendly states
Where goodliness and gain may thrive in peace.
Years hale him forward through sharp agonies
To ampler dignities and waxing powers
That show his past as reek of miseries
Matched with the mercies of arriving hours;
The weedy wilderness a garden grows,
Where brambles throve, abounds the gorgeous rose.

THE RADICAL

The stiff conservative would amplify
All past gain as the last gain gainable,
Whereas uneasy nature will supply
New evolutions as attainable;
Nor will she pause for laggards' discontent,
But, hurrying reinforcements to the field,
Cry "Forward march" to him what e'er his bent,
"Go look for far perfections mist-concealed."
So has the radical as ally true
Nature's prodigious, forward urgency
(Howe'er conservatives may writhe and rue),
To push new movements to new victory;
Man's deadliest foemen are the tory squires
Who scold at fertile nature's fresh desires.

DEVELOPMENT

Here goes the heedless creature man,
Thirsting for love, or gain, or power, or name;
And nothing recks that in his restless frame
Cool nature laboring for her deeper plan—
To mold a finer animal—doth ban
His bad, his good doth bless; whereby her aim
Creeps stealthy on, as hunter toward his game,
Using his wayward passions as she can.
A merry dance he leads, or groans with toil;
Her seeming lord, yet all too haughty fool;
And like an earthworm turning sand to soil
Is in his loftiest moments her blind tool
To give his frame increasing powers—her goal
Sought e'en through soaring transports of his soul.

A SUSPICION

Is man, perhaps, the simian, who betook
Himself to eating flesh, and so became
As carnivore the strongest of his name?
Strongest and fiercest, that would nothing brook
To curb his bloody appetite? 'T would look
As were the violent the pets of dame
Nature; the gentle, subject to her blame,
Doomed to erasure in her secret book.
The cannibal savage aye surpasses those
Who live on nuts and fruits, the Buddhist poor
With weakly rice is dulled; who eats his foes
Or eke his friends finds ample food in store.
The full-fed predatory waxes great,
His victims many wane attenuate.

RISING AND RISEN

A cunning, bloody animal is man,
Who doth achieve his vaunted primacy
By craft and cruelty through all his span,
Heedless how many victims shriek and die;
Such desperate dealing only could secure
His kingship 'mid wild beasts of bulk and claw,
Which low-voiced reason never could conjure,
Where gentle hands were weaker than a straw;
Now crowned and sceptred, man would mask his traits,
Would call the dove his emblem and sing hymns
To love's self-sacrifice, while he berates
Those old allies as low, and their help dims;
But touch his rights! then tooth and claw are bared
And the old lion bristling stands on guard.

ANCESTORS

Who of himself will boast to be liege lord
And master sole to do his own stout will
Forgets the countless ancestors aboard
Battened beneath his hatches, furtive, still;
A pirate crew deep in his tissues hid,
Armed to the teeth with primitive passions strong,
Ready for mischiefs though his soul forbid,
Deaf to all reason, fond of old-time wrong;
Himself, their boasted captain stands aghast,
Bestorms, bewails, beseeches that gray crew,
Arresting one is by his mates caught fast,
And struggling vainly damned their will to do;
Such freedom finds he as 'mid furious mobs
Their victim hath to smile between his sobs.

THE MAKING OF MAN

The silent years within their soft hands took
The molds, for hairy beasts by nature made,
And slowly fingered without lore of book
To curious changes as each fresh need bade.
The paw they wrought to hands' felicities,
Delved fumbling brains with convolutions new,
Taught bended spines erect on feet to rise,
Strung growling throats to vocal voices true.
And with each change new functions grew apace,
New functions framed to powers of loftier strain,
Till full-formed man emerged with thoughtful face,
Art in his fingers, science in his brain.
So did the dust its atoms recompose
Till Bacons, Franklins, Darwins shrewd arose.

MAN THE ANIMAL

Fish, bird, and beast raised towards infinity
Is man compacted of all flesh that goes;
As fish he swims an atmospheric sea
Tempestuous, changeful, thick with crafty foes;
As bird he pranks bewitched with ornament
Outvying peacock, oriole, wren;
Or like the Bobolink on music bent
Forgets the hour in trancing sounds; and then
Prowls and behows both sea and soil, is here
A hare, there tiger, yonder ox or fox;
Cramming with progeny lands far and near,
King-beast of all, and lord of cognate stocks;
Then for himself creates a kosmos new
Where graces reign and pleasures hold review.

HABITS AS FATE

Habits form living tissues fit and strong;
Form species fixed for geologic years;
Form ravening lions dead to weakling fears;
Form subtle snakes to slide the ground along;
Form birds in love with gush of blithesome song;
Form fishes sportive in lugubrious meres;
All living creatures as each now appears
Fast-tethered to his habit-twisted thong;
Each species in its chosen activities
But follows wonts articulate in its joints,
Held by those sinewy machineries
To those sole purposes that match its points;
The general force each transient framework borrows
And gives it chance t' ensure its own to-morrows.



Demos



RACE AND PERSON

How potent seems the lordly person bent
On ends to him most weighty, till he deems
The round world made for his environment
And all things marching to his chosen schemes.
Yet, as the wind-blown foam on crested waves
Were e'en the lordliest heroes when compared
With nameless masses that but peopled graves,
Begetting only children as they fared.
For these preserved their race with puissant loins,
Their race whose solidarity of life
Outweighs the person as the mine its coins,
Itself the motive of the advancing strife.
Cæsar and Newton count as bubbles where
The vast, dark wave of man grows on the air.

GENIUS

Greater than all his geniuses is man,
And abler to attain his larger ends,
Unled, than all his leaders in the van
To march him to them; he, real leader, lends
Their genius to his geniuses, and gives
The inspirations, claimed to come from heaven,
To poets, heroes, orators; he lives
In his own great, who sole had never striven.
But this race-man, who worships them on high,
By plodding labor, menial, scorned, and dull,
Creates the sphere where ease and leisure ply
Their braggart powers, and genius fares to full.
Genius can never show his painted wings
But where toil's wealth its genial sunshine brings.

THE GOOD OLD TIMES

As is a steamer thrashing down the bay
In teeth of wind and tide, quite unconcerned
So long as black coals in her grates are burned,
Bearing rich freights and gay humanity—
As is such steamer to a sail-ship's way,
That drifts, beats, tacks, and veers as winds are turned,
Fighting to reach her harbor hardly earned
When God please, if no wreckage give her stay—
So is our teeming time to times grown old,
Whose fitful feats gray braggarts chaunt with lies;
Times of much-baffled sailings scant of gold,
Where foam our days o'er mains of rich surprise;
We reach a thousand ports oft longed for then,
First op'ed to us—the bolder, happier men.

OUR AGE

Our day is bolder than all days of yore,
Finding that courage such advantage earns,
That with the eagles it takes wing to soar,
And with the lions sooner fights than turns;
Thin ghostly terrors it disdains unharmed,
Dragons, enchantments, fiends and angels scouts;
Jests at old gods and bibles unalarmed,
And threats of future vengeance boldly flouts;
Women it decks with freedom's fearless crest;
Exalts bold traders o'er gilt soldiers tall;
Crowns Saint Success above saints east or west,
And cheers new sports that grim ascetics gall;
All earthly things confronts and dominates,
And all unearthly scornfully awaits.

DESIRE

Uneasy, troublous rebel thou, desire!
Thy mettlesome stir hath brought us all things better;
Thy play along our nerves in streams of fire
Hath ever rent in twain tradition's fetter;
Yet Buddha bans thy cravings; Christians erst
Scourged their sweet flesh to check thy yearnings sharp;
Quakers bid strangle thee as one accurst,
And doting elders at thine unrest carp;
Mere ape were man without thy rabid sting;
Living mid nature's want, unclad and lean,
Haunting tall trees where he might chatter and swing,
While day dropped into day and left all mean;
But thine electric touch through his flesh shivers
Till every fibre into wishes quivers.

BRAINS MANY

Millions of eager brains released from gyves,
Wrestling the problems of our fearsome life
Which challenge all to battle and hourly strife
Make the democracy that now arrives;
No leader orders it, no church contrives
To set a dominant commanding key,
But each unleashing his own faculty
Strains towards his chosen goal with zeal that drives
His million-fold, impatient energies
Each to its special aim, with wondrous gain
Of power where he but does her will in his;
And passion with relish urges him amain.
Mankind unfettered swells its streams of power
By every person added to its dower.

CLASSES AND MASSES

What a menagery's din of growling cries
Breaks on our noisy time! What howls and moans,
What roars and cheers assault the neutral skies!
Classes and masses fight; the victim groans,
The victor blows his trumpet long and loud;
Hearts bleed and hearts exult; the injured wail
As 'neath scythed chariots tearing through the crowd;
Shouts, screams, and shrieks peal up and many fail;
All fight for place; classes to keep, the mass
To win; the masses would be classes clean
And rich and strong; they tire of wallowing crass;
They wrestle for high prizes, nothing mean;
Sublime ambition! Let it louder roar
Tireless as breakers on the arrogant shore.

FORECAST

Round sheltered coves of aristocracy
The world's good fortune cruised for many an age,
When arts and wise inventions did engage
But few amid the throngs of men that die;
Now puts it forth the shoreless deep to try,
Ventures its treasures where wild typhoons rage,
Wrecking the barks of flamen, king and sage,
'Mid lashing surges of democracy;
How shall it fare upon that chartless main,
What storm shall meet or happy voyage sail,
We know not, who 'neath sun or driving rain
In that adventure brave th' untrammelled gale;
But this we know that man cannot be lost,
So quick his wit however tempest-tossed.

DEMOCRACY

Democracy! the thunder of thy tread
Shakes this and other continents with fear;
Thy shaggy legions trampling park and bed
Like herds of rampant buffalo appear;
But thy wild droves rush on toward objects new,
Spurning small lives distressed by fortunes mean,
Intent on nature's affluent residue,
For welfare hot, with brains alert and keen;
Thy march heads skyward up the human slope;
Thy haste outpaces aristocracies;
Man's standard thou wilt plant above the hope
Of idler ages spent in plaintive sighs;
Hail to thy daring, to thy cheery mood,
And stormy progress, brother multitude!

THE MAJORITY

Thou many-headed ruler blindly feared
By owls who dubbed their own view wise, and called
Thee Cerberus and Hydra, when appalled
They saw thy crescent power! How hast thou reared
Thy nations to a dizzy height, and cleared
The stigmas that thy slandered strength had galled!
Since in thy handling man all disenthralled
Deployed grand forces that the past outpeered;
Now shines thine orb above th' enkindled time
Like some sky-scaling comet sun-enchained,
That blazons astonished heaven with fires sublime,
And draws all eyes e'en those with hate distained;
Wiseacres scoff thy splendors, but wise laud
And from thy raucous throat hear voice of God.

THE LION AND THE MOUSE

Poor raggedness within the strangling net
Of poverty, with grand limbs leonine
Enmeshed! Is there no straying mouse can set
His teeth to gnaw thee from that webbing fine?
Thou art so handsome, stalwart, manly, brave,
Why should such tangling threads thy brain o'erpower
And hold thee captive to small objects? Crave
Quick release and to that bend each hour.
Yet well we know, no mouse or mice will loose
Thy sculptured strength from that entanglement;
But thoughtful industry will tear the noose
To shreds; till when, thou 'rt bound, though discontent;
And thou mayest struggle vainly, seeking good
Till death come with his gray, oblivious hood.

PROLETARIAT

But one thing ails thee, commoner distrest!
Thy poverty! From that all miseries creep;
The rest were paltry, easy to arrest,
Wouldst thou but penury's iron fence o'erleap;
Hast thou no friends? Good money friends would buy;
No talent? Gold would quite replenish wit;
No beauty? Costly raiment would deny
Thine ugliness, where coarse but strengthens it;
Art sad? Lean poverty hath no resource;
Art mad? No vengeance can the beggar take;
Art sick? Good medicine flies to a purse;
Art weary? Wealth can every task forsake.
Go heal thy pocket! Wisely use thy wage;
So canst thou surely every woe assuage.

HINDS

A grimy dwarf-folk at the forge of deeds,
Despised and cuffed, befouled with sweat and dirt,
Have toiled with horny hands and loins ungirt
Through painful centuries for scanty meeds.
Their bended backs have felt the scourge, and beads
Of blood have dripped from harsh slave-masters' hurt,
Yet plodding they could ne'er their task desert
To get release from lowest primal needs.
Scholars and kings and captains famed in fights
Have deemed that welfare of themselves was born,
And seen with dour neglect the toilsome wights
Whose needful labors touched their taste to scorn;
But graces, muses, warriors, wits combined,
Without these dwarf-folk boors had caught but wind.



Vulcan



MACHINERY

I

Briareus! Thou hundred-handed gnome,
Best offspring of man's brain, his drudge all days,
Rough nurse to young toil in his lowly home,
Thy tireless strength and brazen voice amaze!
Saviour of serf and slave art thou, and all
Who in the frost of shivering want are chilled;
Whom apish ignorance and fear appal,
Are by thy products taught, caressed, and filled.
What heroes' arms, what martyrs' blood, what art,
Learning, and laws had striven in vain to give,
Thy hands with easy power to man impart
Abundance, leisure, freedom, zest to live.
Preachers could prose, and poets potter in vain,
But thou dost fill and drive a high-piled wain!

II

Thy fortunes, O Democracy the great!
Are bolted to machinery's whirling arms,
Whose tireless flying fingers liberate
Thy feeble limbs from toil's consuming harms;
Machinery with its rigorous discipline
Drills to precision labor's soldiery;
The meagre dues of handcraft doth resign
For speed of steam-craft whose rewards are high;
How manhood grows where glides the piston rod!
Whirr! Buzz! Roar! In sawmill, thresher, dynamo,
In loom, forge, printing-press! Could any god
Across poor earth with fuller gift-hands go?
Let tired millions tossing hats in air
Shout on its royal progress everywhere!

SOCIALISM

The half-world famished wails its toilsome path;
Greedy of goods with tempting pleasure rife,
Masses contend like lowing bulls in strife
With glowering eyes and clashing horns of wrath;
Each poor man claiming what a richer hath,
And blaming partial gods that put a knife
To one's young throat, and others grant long life,
Would treat flush rivals to a bloody bath.
But naught 't would boot were each day's products shared
Among producers on terms brotherly;
Still would the clamors of sharp want be heard
'Mid the sparse yields of present husbandry.
Naught can assuage the clamorous wants of all
But larger yields from factory and stall.

CUPID AND VULCAN

Poets sing hymns to love,—love fond and deep,
As man's redeemer who could right all wrong
By making him a creature sweet and strong,
His cruel instincts crooned to cradle-sleep;
Yet mark they no clear path by which to creep
From gnawing selfishness unpitying, long,
To the fine idyl of love's rapturous song,
Save that by loving, love to power shall leap;
But love is aye a child and delicate,
Craves body's weal and cannot live when bruised
Where aching hunger makes men desperate,
Or aching flesh of killing cold 's misused;
So villein Vulcan first must Cupid house
Ere he can kindle his divine carouse.

EZEKIEL

Had'st thou prevision, oh thou flaming seer!
In thy wild dream of whirling "wheels in wheels,"
(Which mystery in a darker mystery seals,)
Of latter days when wiser men should gear
Their fortunes to machineries and steer
Toward plenty's day of God? Ah no! Who deals
With thy enigmas but for spirit feels,
And doth at creature comforts grandly sneer;
Had the rapt visionary with saner views
Disclosed what "spirit" in those wheels should dwell,
He had not counselled temples to his Jews
But swiftly-spinning factory-reels as well;
Good spindle-work had saved the Hebrew state
To thriving fortunes less disconsolate.

THE LOCOMOTIVE

Of old, great monsters bellowing frightful sounds
And breathing flame from nostrils fiery red
Spread terror and smote coward people dead,
Making a desert of their gruesome rounds.
Now steel-mailed dragons, docile as good hounds,
Snort steam and fire o'er leagues of iron bed,
While flying on errands swift as swallows sped,
Not breathing death nor hurt of baneful wounds.
Ever these clanking monsters to and fro
Roar through the continents with human spoil,
Their might not direful, nor their ravin woe;
But all enrichments gathered in their coil.
This fire-eyed dragon in his burnished scale
Kills countless miseries with his whirling tail.

THE FACTORY

Clank most unbearable of whirling wheels!
Walls most unbeautiful that make one sigh!
A dizzy maze of pulleys, belts, and reels,
That wool or steel to crafty patterns ply!
Armies unarmed serve this bewildering gear,
Sentries stand guard lest its swift work be marred;
All cheery though their vigils be severe,
Since sure their wage, from nature's freaks debarred.
Their stint fulfilled, they swarm the doors like bees
That in the flower-time spurn full parent hives;
The streets and alleys choke like autumn leaves,
On pleasure bent,—true end of human lives.
Its prodigal dues this deafening factory yields
In richer harvests than e'en fertile fields.

REVEILLE

What marshal drum-beat of mundane affairs
That lull or swell the stress of human life
Outbreaks in news-sheets that supplant mean cares
With the vast rumor of man's earthly strife!
Following the noiseless sun the reveille rolls
Round the large globe. There horrors groan,
Mirth laughs, commerce, war, love, whate'er controls
Man's life gets each a strident tone.
Louder than Wagner's din of echoing strain,
Shriller and grander, harsher, sweeter far
Than trumpets, cymbals, flutes that wax or wane,
Is man's wild clangor of law-molded war;
And this resounding roll-call daily beat
Discordant journals on each city street.

THE NEWSPAPER

This crownless monarch, Czar of mob and mart,
Whose trenchant words like well-aimed arrows fly,
Piercing all souls with brilliant archery,
Skulks in no fortress from mankind apart,
Nor doth commands in secrecy impart;
Him every strange event from far and nigh,
Each benediction, each catastrophe
Concerns, with all that stirs the human heart.
Never was autocrat to governed realm
So open-eyed and -hearted as this Czar;
Whom force, injustice, cruelties o'erwhelm,
His palace doors forever find ajar.
No guard of troopers doth his state require
Whose throne is reason and the world's desire.

MORSE'S TELEGRAPH

"Attention, universe! By kingdoms right
Wheel!" cried Morse exultant o'er his leagues of wire;
A new field-marshal heralding, whose might
Should order empires by a flick of fire;
Obedient continents he now commands;
With half a word the well-drilled globe constrains;
Kings, warriors, traders, to his master-hands
Yield instant service; no one him disdains;
The human mob is to an army drilled;
He keeps the nations' quick-step close inlocked;
Precision reigns where late confusion filled
The hemispheres, and tangled progress blocked;
Blending their voices in one ringing cheer,
Men come to love each other far and near



Crafts



ELECTRICITY

Mercurial sprite! Whose doublings here and there
Outpace the flash of thought,—all masterless,
And though so masterful yet baffled where
Some alien fibre may thy flight repress!
What playful Puck art thou to trap and keep,
That now the tough-grained oak with ease dost shiver,
And now an unbridged air-space durst not leap,
Balked like a warlock by a running river!
To cure, then kill; to dart a blinding streak,
Then slip away like faith and leave no sign;
To jog in harness, then in frenzied freak
Split trees to ribbons is thy way malign!
Yet oft this tricky electricity
Dances attendance on a little key.

THE MODERN DANCE OF DEATH

The ticker stamps its tape from ten to three
With figures changeful as a rippling bay,
While sanguine crowds hang o'er it tremblingly
To make their hundreds, thousands, in a day;
And to and fro the figures fluctuate
In dizzy maze as any firefly's flight,
To "shorts" and "longs" alike a tempting bait
Could skill but once devise to strike it right;
But some sly goblin ever whisks aside
The golden chance which all are hot to gain,
Till beggared, angered, heart-sore on the tide
Of gamesters ruined, they drift down the main;
This flitter-dance with demon witchery
Tempts souls to earthly hell unceasingly.

THE LIGHT-HOUSE

Fair Luna is to evening lovers dear,
And to brown mariners her rimpled light
Far-silvering angry billows dark with night;
But fickle is she over land and mere.
The light-house less romantic may appear,
But when coy Luna hides, still glances bright,
Where black, uprising hordes of surges smite
Imperilled navies with foreboding fear.
For nature tricks her children endlessly,
Betrays with beauty, and betrayed destroys;
Till they, grown wary of her antics sly,
Safeguard their steps, distrusting fair decoys.
Yet harried ever, they must fend their way
Against her treacheries every transient day.

PLANET AND LANTERN

High o'er the hill doth Jupiter display
The nightly silver luminous and mild
Of his imperial orb afar enisled
In crystal æther, chained to solar sway;
But lo! Beneath his large, eternal ray,
Tipping the wave crests as if Dian smiled,
A ship's light glances o'er the waters wild,
Brighter and larger than the planet's may.
The ship's poor lamp has but an earthly date,
Which makes that men will praise the heavenly sphere
Neglecting that which most concerns their fate
Though it guard life forefending dangers near.
For men like children set their vagrant eyes
On splendors distant and near goods disprize.

THE MARINER'S COMPASS

How sees the eyeless needle of wan steel
The feeble lustre of yon polar star,
That it should point its meaning finger there,
As having some enigma to reveal?
With trembling constancy on every keel
It holds its glimmering spear forever true,
Changeless amid all changes of earth's crew,
And 'mid all tempests to one duty leal.
What cosmic currents its fine sense control
To keep direction on the freest poise!
Or has it something daintier than a soul
And more responsive to the secret laws?
Do forces that through its thrall'd atoms wave
Hold man's profounder being as their slave?

WOOD'S HOLL

A bell rings out, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong,
Across the darkling waters of the night,
As were 't the death of some unhappy wight;
Dolorous out-wails its iterate song,
Now low, then loud, now rare, then fast and strong.
Hath it some startling quest to expedite?
Sounds it a call to conflagration bright
That thus its peals reverberate so long?
'T is but the bell-buoy swinging to and fro,
Storm-driven the sailor hears its mournful tongue,
That warns him off from some reef-girdled woe,
Whose breakers else might his death dirge have sung.
He hears and jams his helm about in time
T' escape long silence in the sea-weed's slime.

POINT JUDITH

The whistling buoy rocks on a lazy sea,
And seldom blows its hoarsened, wordless note
Monotonous as from a raven's throat;
The lounging sailor hears it carelessly;
Anon a slow fog creeps along to be
A blanket shrouding all sea-craft afloat,
Till none knows whither drives his blinded boat;
The whistle croaks, to be heard thankfully;
A gale swoops down when night has fallen thick;
The surges clash with far-resounding shock;
The anxious helmsman—now his ears are quick—
Hearing that sea-crow on its dripping rock,
Catches his breath, and blind with bitter spray
Thinks of his children as he swirls away.

THE MILLENNIUM

Long dreamed the church of a millennium
To fall abrupt from heaven; but open eyes
See it advancing in unscriptural guise
Headed by men untensured; without drum,
Herald, or angel Gabriel does it come;
Its trump a whistle from steel machineries,
Which keen inventors for mere gain devise,
Oil-sprinkled by no priestly medium.
It brings in plenty more than pieties,
Short hours of labor, not long hours of prayer,
Pleasures abundant, not austerities,
And lives luxurious laughing at bleared care.
Since easier toils an ampler substance win,
Industrial bells millennial joy ring in.

Craftsmen



THE AMBULANCE

The city pave re-echoes countless feet
That haste all ways on various errand bent—
A restless crowd, each lost in his intent,
Counting as naught his fellows on the street;
When lo! An ambulance with horses fleet
And startling gong speeds by as it were sent
A fast express to rescue some wretch spent
By crime or accident or blistering heat;
And now what throng crowds close in sympathy
With pitying face and eyes compassionate!
Until the sufferer on soft cushions lie
And whirls away, they on his misery wait;
Such tender feeling in man's bosom springs
To succor unbefriended sufferings.

MANKIND

How dear are men in their fantastic ways,
Their passions, laughters, hatreds right and wrong;
Their sinewy figures lusty, handsome, strong;
Their quick flirtations and blood-curdling frays;
The bustling streets, the home of waifs and strays,
Are made a picture changing all day long,
Where lovely women light the common throng,
And deeds heroic flash through common days.
E'en crime, filth, cruelty—all sins enfleshed
In living bodies have a subtle lure,
Our mortal sympathies are so enmeshed
We lose not fellowship with souls impure;
And round the convict's neck some one throws arm
With love's caress for pity of his harm.

THE MECHANIC

The swart mechanic hath live days on earth,
Where engines clatter, and machinery
Brings the grand wonders of its arts to birth,
Enlarging time's untiring novelty;
Small is his house, but neighbors gather thick,
Like blackbirds chattering in breezy flocks,
Of strikes or wages, or how Tom and Dick
Have won a fortune by their own shrewd knocks;
Life's eager news flits like the flies through town,
Where men concentre, and fresh works are seen,
Where schemes buzz in the air, where trade and gown
Learn a real world and what its actions mean;
So is a pastime found in shop and street
That stirs emotion and makes leisure sweet.

THE ENGINE DRIVER

Within his cab the engine driver stands
Grimy and hale with nerve of tempered steel,
The throttle lever near his well-trained hands,
The air-brake ready to his thundering wheel;
Throbs his huge motor down the iron way;
His eye, unresting, scans the endless rail;
Watching the future through the livelong day
Since him death shadows hot upon his trail;
Swiftly he rounds a curve; oh God! just there
An adverse train drives up his single track!
One instant given, to save though by a hair
The crowd of passengers behind his back;
He sees himself or them the sacrifice,
Then flings the throttle ere death glaze his eyes.

THE SWITCHMAN

High in his noisy tower the switchman stands,
Lord of the levers of compulsive fates,
One forward bends, another backward brakes,
Obedient to his rapid, careful hands;
Below great trains rush roaring toward far lands,
Express and local, passenger and freights,
Nor noting where untouched of loves or hates
He shunts as each time-table him commands.
What issues hang upon his sure address!
One lever wrong, and sickening horrors fall,
Where groans of mangled people in distress,
Or fortunes wrecked and ruined lives appeal!
But system on his hand her firm hand lays
To guard the guardian of our threatened days.

CUSTODES

The large policeman of athletic form,
Amid the hurrying throngs of mart and street
Towers like an Amal, heeding sun nor storm,
Hunts human monsters on his busy beat;
Like some horse-governing Achilles he
Unwinds the tangled thick of fretting steeds,
Guards timid beauty with calm chivalry,
And nervous rustics on their business speeds;
The thief he collars, and the rough he quells,
Fells the assassin as he turns to flight;
The small boy fearlessly with club compels,
And scares the brown fruit-pedlar pale with fright;
His Saul-like grandeur doth with strength adorn
The highways where he succors wights forlorn.

THE FIREMAN

I

More glorious than a belted knight of old
The fireman rides his steed of steel and flame
'Mid coruscating showers of fiery gold
Throwing a halo round his stalwart frame.
In a wild gale of speed his horses whirl
Towards the fierce conflagration, whose broad light
Flares heavenward in far-dancing flames that hurl
Black smoke against the stars of wide-eyed night.
Then cool and wary, with the eager joy
Of perfect courage disciplined to deed,
He trains his nozzle where his foes destroy,
Despising dangers that the general heed;
And laughs to see his crackling floods o'ercrow
The demon fires that glare and writhe below.

II

Now hiss the angry flames like serpents red,
Swifter than boas, than live asps more fell;
Within whose coils all living fall as dead,
Whose den is as the pit of sulphurous hell;
But see! Amid their darting tongues on high
A child's frail form leans from the casement's square
And screaming tosses its small arms awry,
Escape cut off! Now what brave soul will dare?
Lo! The rash fireman, swinging by his hands,
Springs from the cornice to the window's ledge,
And swift within the burning chamber lands
To seize the child upon destruction's edge;
To seize, spring, save from that hot-leaping death,
While round him curls the fiery dragon's breath.

THE FIREMAN

III

Now blackened, scorched, and faint in pale distress
He pitches forward in a comrade's arms,
Who fears a hurt the hero 'll ne'er confess,
And swiftly bears him from the reach of harms;
But in a hospital retired he moans
For many a day delirious on his cot,
Tosses with anguish piercing all his bones;
Yet healed at last forgets his gruesome lot.
Then to his post restored stands sworn again,
A doughty champion dauntless toward his foe,
To battle for his fellows, might and main
Against the deadly bale that wrought him woe;
So ever warring on that enemy
With tireless courage runs swift life away.

THE TEAMSTER

Upon his box high-held the truckster sits,
No charioted Mars more grandly bold,
Reining his Percherons champng on their bits,
And threatening all doth vilely swear and scold;
The street is deafening with sharp-ringing wheels,
With shouts of drivers, hoofs of steeds that leer,
Straining ahead or lashing out their heels,
While cool mid-air the teamster rules austere.
His brawny arms half-bare, his open throat
Red with exposure, veined and thick with force,
His insolent head and lusty glance denote
The easy master ready of resource;
The huge-limbed brutes held in his wilful hand
May fret and fume but catch his least command.

THE FARMER

What soulless leagues stretch out the yeoman's earth,
Void save of cattle, fowl, and silly sheep!
Where one poor household month and year must keep
To plodding drudgeries seldom touched to mirth;
What meagre recompense rewards their worth!
Seed-time means toil and toil the grains must reap;
A stinted pleasure and an ox-like sleep
Are slim returns for such a tedious hearth;
The well-groomed poet city-nursed and fine
Sings of the rustic's joy in nature's bloom,
Of birds and brooks and fields of corn and wine,
Ignoring his worn face and changeless doom;
To live sequestered from one's kind sums all
The sorest ills can human soul befall.

THE FRONTIERSMAN

Frank, natural man, democracy's first son,
In garb uncouth on body lean and tough,
His boots and pistols, bowie-knife and gun
Give him a name for reckless hands and rough;
What lusty courage doth his tanned skin hold!
What swift resource 'gainst nature or mean men!
What fresh romance of action swift and bold!
What lawless hazards dared in many a den!
A terror of loud boasts, threats, blasphemy,
Soil-stained, well-mounted from the mines he tears,
His pockets full of gold-dust; for one day
With harpy-loves he revels, gambles, swears,
Then rambles back, a beggar; such his lot,
All drunk with life, till in some fight he's shot.

THE COWBOY

A centaur when in saddle, man and horse
One animal with one swift eager will,
Herding a thousand neat he spurs his course,
Dividing, rounding, branding, corralling still;
By day he lightly holds his bridle rein,
But what a ride when in the pitch-dark night
The two-horned herd stampedes across the plain
In one resounding thunder of blind fright!
No carpet knight then serves to turn their head,
Where one false step may hurl his steed to earth
Before their trampling hoofs, and leave him dead,
A mass of quivering flesh, a carrion's worth;
Yet like a cyclone whirling on he fares,
Nor for such peril half a farthing cares.

THE NEWSBOY

Light-footed Ganymede,—the messenger
Of men than gods Olympian more busy,—
Our tattered newsboy keeps the town astir
Crying his papers through its uproar dizzy;
All deeds, all doctrines, all divisions lie
In friendly contact tucked beneath his arm,
While he with voice impartial bawls his cry,
“Times, Tribune, Herald, World,”—thought's latest swarm.
One flaunts the victory of its party fights;
One moans defeat, and doth all flesh upbraid;
One champions workmen, one new woman's rights;
One preaches tariff, one the freest trade;
The impartial newsboy sells at equal rates,
Then scampers off to craps and gambling mates.

THE PLACER MINER

Armed with a nozzle spouting geyser streams,
The placer miner storms an ancient hill,
Gores its stone flanks to glut his greedy dreams,
And tears it like a cataract fierce of will.
The shining gold—a flake amid the wreck—
With guileful art he collars as it flies,
That not escapes him any skulking fleck
Eluding his detective, Mercury's eyes.
And when his vans are stuffed with culprit gold
Arrested in his sluiceways like some knave,
He hies him to the town where bought and sold
Are myriad pleasures that his heart may crave.
There herded with the world-enjoying great
He chuckles o'er his league with golden fate.

THE LABORER

A much abused and ever toiling man
Whose woes cry out on deaf neglectful fate,
Who ever seems too early or too late—
The laborer has been, since old earth began.
Looking on others whose achievements span
A larger arc, he doth them hard berate,
In false belief that they their wishes sate
Upon his toil; so fights the greater man.
But not with man, with Nature in his strife,
'Tis Nature's grudging makes him lean and sad;
She only with unmeasured wealth is rife,
Alone can give him what he needs. When mad
Let him rob her, as have the rich before,
She can give all things, having all in store.

THE COAL-MINER

Was 't an abhorrent plot of jealous gods
That piled the measures of industrial coal
In sunless caverns deep, 'neath rock and sods,
Where man must burrow like an eyeless mole?
Hid from the cheer of Sol's all-beauteous day,
In noisome galleries he plies his tool,
Boring and blasting drives his fearful way,
And earns his bread, though losing there his soul.
A sickly lamp his gruesome toil illumines,
Where deadly vapors from each rift exhale;
Explosions lurk in every chamber's fumes,
Or roofs cave in and bury him in shale.
Yet loves he oft his owlish industry,
And finds good sunlight garish to his eye.

SERVANTS

Turmoil of servants like a windy sea,
Turmoil of households like a wind-tossed bark,
And in the turmoil clamorous misery,
Domestic concord lost as Noah's ark.
Yet were contentment but a menial stain
On souls enslaved to unambitious fates
Unworthy of our century's glorious gain,
Nor stepping with its march toward great estates.
Now doth the servant aim for better things,
Tired of the toil and moil of ruder days,
Finds pleasure also in the pheasant's wing,
And like my lady loves the street's bright ways.
Master and man together scale the slopes
That mount to crests whence gleam high human hopes.

JOHNNIE RAGS

Shirt, hat, and trowsers held by wooden pin
To one suspender, runs about the street,
Our "Black-yeer-boots" and future citizen,
His box beneath his arm, sole tool to meet
All life's great needs; pale, smutted face, bold eyes,
A voice as shrill and clear as any crow's.
"Shine, boss?" he cries, and "No" received, he flies
To some new passer; swift as paper blows.
He has no home, nor any school attends,
Sleeps 'neath a truck, eats when he gets the scot,
And like an Arab heeds not where he wends,
The heavens his tent; such is his friendless lot.
So grows to be a voter, low, untaught,
And helps elect his sort, all friends! Why not?

ORGAN GRINDER

What strain of march, or waltz, or lovers' songs
The soiled Italian flings abroad each day
Beneath all skies, all weathers as he may,
Rehearsing naught that to his life belongs!
His sad heart may be breaking with deep wrongs,
His wife be dying, and his babes a prey
To hunger's pangs; still peals the roundelay
In festal cadences to cheery throngs.
"Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay" the music sings;
"Per god—a penna—sare,—my wife-a die,"
Poor Beppo wails with intermingling psalm,
Then to a tripping waltz his organ wrings.
Street children dance about the tragedy
Played in his heart behind a screen of calm.

THE TENEMENT

As blue-winged swallows from their nests below
The friendly covert of o'erhanging eaves
Round rural stables swarm and overflow,
Content while them a home of mud receives,
So in the tenement do human broods
Seek crowded shelter for themselves and young
Rather than scatter through the leafy woods
Where niggard nature but scant good has flung.
The well thronged tenement gives company,
Which many a prouder home doth sadly miss,
And merrier children on its stairways play
Than on wide fields 'mid nature's loneliness.
Barn swallows chirp and bicker as they fly,
These human swallows brawl as cheerily.

DELMONICO'S

Within, bright lights and flashing jewels play!
Without, a cold wind rudely raked the street;
Where in a grated arch, whence puffed spent heat,
A newsboy wedged was sleeping as boys may;
With cameo face, some cherub-waif-and-stray,
Like one of Raphael's angels pure and sweet,
Unconscious on the gruff policeman's beat,
As in the cosiest chamber, snug he lay;
Tranquil his breathing, unconcerned and deep,
Rosy his cheek as is th' auroral morn,
And poverty, his tattered chamberlain, did keep
His body harmless as a young prince born;
So slept he in the arms of blustering night
As one of fortune made the favorite.

ORIENT AND OCCIDENT

In dreams of dragons, colors, miracles,
The East was nodding through somniferous hours,
Devising porcelains, pictures, silks, and flowers,
And grim austerities to save from hells;
Comes the brisk West with breezy voice and tells
Of miracles outdone by natural powers,
Of quick release from present hells by hours
With tools which uncomplaining steam compels;
Breaks the new comer on the Orient's drowse,
Troubling narcotic dreams and childish glees
With fresh ambitions on earth's goods to browse
And taste felicities that brains may seize;
And though the Orient lose some artist sense,
It welfare gains in loss of impotence.

THE TRAMP

Betrayed by cozening nature who has made
Him lazy without adding wealth, that he
To get his living must make daily raid
On strenuous labor, comes he tramp to be;
His faded garments fit him wretchedly,
As whose would not, if gathered here and there—
Cast-offs of small and tall, fat, lean, and wry?
A scarecrow's plunder, elegance would swear.
Were he but rich, he might the livelong day
Beneath his own trimmed hedges lie, nor earn
Contempt, scorn, obloquy, but now his way
Is lined with foes—boys, dogs, and taunts that burn.
Yet all he bears if he may slavery shirk
Nor spoil his leisure with a menial's work.

SAMOANS

Sons of hot tropics naked of disguise
Stretch their large limbs on platted mats of palm
Beneath the cocoanut thatch, and feel no qualm
That lapsing time unused on swift wing flies;
Doth strenuous nature them so highly prize
That she provides their bread and brawny ease
On the surf-girdled isles of thunderous seas
Where grow self-raising fruits like paradise?
Their rippled shoulders swell with virile force,
Their mighty limbs betoken animal pleasure;
Their eyes untroubled, and unfurrowed brows,
Hint of life's gladness quaffed at primal source;
Do anxious we transgress calm nature's measure,
Who seek delight in labor or carouse?



Property



PLUTUS

Plutus had frigid service in the Pantheon
Of sun-crowned gods that on Olympus dwelt,
Disdained for grander deities, who won
Allegiance from more worshippers, that knelt
To cloudy Jove, sweet Venus, or fierce Mars;
Their shrines with many a gift were sued,
While Plutus, shining weakly 'mid such stars,
Had victims scant for his beatitude;
But those crowd-reverenced gods, in latter days,
Have paled their haloes in forgetfulness,
Stript of their honors through time's changeul ways,
While Plutus doth the thronged Exchange possess;
For golden ingots Plutus bears in hand,
And throned as money takes Jove's old command.

PLUTUS AS JOVE

Strongest of gods and yet the most abused,
Plutus rules men in his indifferent way,
Taking no counsel of grave wits or gay,
His power like gravitation all-diffused;
Forever regnant, oft his strength misused,
He handles human lives with tyrannous sway,
Asking no worship, careless who gainsay,
Or what fine morals, names, or nations be contused;
Who spurn his sceptre only bruise their heel,
Though men, the noblest, shout them loud applause;
At every turn they shall his godhood feel
Baffled and wounded by his trenchant laws;
And though men call on other deities
They all mean him who most of wants supplies.

MAMMON

God of this world as Mammon stigmatized!
Thy glittering face and glorious works disclose
Th' all-powerful lord of heathen and baptized
Wherever men o'er brute conditions rose;
Who scout thy name still at thine altar kneel;
Who scorn thy greatness at thy feet bow down;
Thine absence sages mourn, and king's thrones reel
Before rich upstarts who have filched thy crown;
Cowed priests declaim against thee, yet outstretch
Their consecrated palms for gleaming gold;
Thy frown can make the happiest a wretch,
Thy smile bring honor, love, and friends untold;
Hypocrisy feigns scorn to acknowledge thee,
With lighter scorn thou see'st him at thy knee.

WEALTH

True motor of all progress, magic tool,
Wealth stirs the deserts to an April bloom,
Covers with conquering ships the seaways cool,
Plants princely cities where furred brutes had room;
The subtle Greek it trained to wondrous arts;
To mighty Rome, transformed a robbers' den;
Where wild men in thick jungles slung their darts,
Made footpaths highways, footpads gentlemen;
It lifts mankind to every high emprise,
Makes brotherhoods of nations battle-fain,
Fosters fine letters till the dunce grows wise,
Enlarges love till e'en sect-hatreds wane;
And that man-eating tiger, penury
Slinks cowed before it to his lair to die.

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

Want of good money, of all evil root,
Lures men to shames and crimes of blackest dye,
Makes pirate, burglar, forger, prostitute,
And tempts the good to basest treachery;
Want sells fresh maids to hated lovers old,
Nerves the assassin to his bloody rage;
Emboldens liars to treasons manifold;
Robs helpless orphans of their heritage;
Want sells the politician's vote for cash,
And private honor sells for public blame;
The judge's ermine with foul stains doth plash;
And all that wealth can give for wealth will shame;
For want of money is a ravening wolf
That balks at nothing in its maw's behoof.

TEMPLE AND TRAFFIC

In vain men cry to blessed saint and shrine !
In vain beg benediction from the air !
These nothing to their sobbing vows consign;
They starve, they drown, they ache, and they despair;
But shrineless Traffic leads his flock to wealth;
Gives them long life and fatness of the earth,
Clubs, motors, hospice, travel, means to health,
Good roads and railways, books and social mirth;
Therefore fair temple! they do well who turn
To worldly markets from thy barren fane!
They gain a heritage and good days earn,
They pass through life most happy, useful, sane;
And dead they rest in high-piled haughty tombs
And none can prove they meet unhappy dooms.

ST. FRANCIS

Most wanton of all vows is this
That weds to poverty the novice, who
Without such vow can silently pursue
That tramp so cheap and old; her blistering kiss
Stings all our lips except a few whose bliss
But makes the general lot a greater rue;
To vow one's life to wealth were task more true,
Since wealth asks toil, of weal the genesis;
Untonsured drones are never dubbed to saints,
And why should tonsured win an aureole?
Not drones but delvers lessen life's constraints;
Wealth-makers better fill his saintship's rôle;
Her beggar's skinny hands o'er most of folk
Wan Poverty extends; condemn her yoke!

MERCURY

The god of thieves was wind-winged Mercury,
And god of traders too mid Rome's stout folk,
As if those bloody robbers could not brook
To honor theft save made with butchery;
So soon was gentle commerce held to be
Less noble than grim war's all-murderous stroke,
To slay one's fellows grander than work's yoke,
As still 's believed mid spangled soldiery;
His simian brain so long mankind misleads
On its long march in search of human good
That plundering earls get more for plundering deeds
Than laboring churls for leagues of ripening food;
But now that wars consent of bankers crave,
Mercury shows Mars to be a swaggering knave.

CAPTAINS TWAIN

War-captains countless have been loudly hailed
Who left pale heaps of dead upon the plain,
And clamorous history cheers the dreadful bane
Of their deeds called sublime even when they failed;
But better captains of trade's ranks unmailed
Whose conquests brought man affluence with their gain,
Guiltless of orphan, and war's bloody stain,
As rogues and soulless Shylocks are assailed.
These add abundance to the human dower
And heap the world's chest with life-cheering wealth;
Where drought did parch, their genius brings a shower;
Where Generals blighted, they bring general health;
Why "Ave Cæsar" to bad Captain Raid
But "rogue and robber" to good Captain Trade?

CAPITAL

A mountain tarn, beneath whose darksome face
The silenced rills of many a rivulet hide,
Reveals not how its waters pour their tide
Through city streets and burghers' homes apace;
So is a hoarded wealth, whose glittering grace
May gild one family's o'er-weening pride,
A reservoir, whose far-off outflows glide
Through countless households of the populace.
Down every human haunt they ripple and sing
Coursing the iron mains of enterprise,
Refreshing rills of wage to labor bring,
To fainting industry renewed supplies.
Ungathered into lakes of cumulate force
Those paltry rills had run a paltry course.

ENTERPRISES

Absorbed in plans the chief of great affairs
Scarce feels he lives, so is engrossed his mind;
He little recks of man or woman-kind,
And much is pitied as o'erwhelmed with cares;
But he like bright Apollo onward fares
Guiding the flaming steeds of crescent day,
Whose traces draw upon its gleaming way
Success's golden car up heaven's stairs;
Himself as charioteer who shakes the reins
And lashes forward that unbroken team,
Glad of the mastery his hand retains,
Doth not a moment of real hardship dream;
When headlong dashed he still hath made his race;
If master, always like a star his face.

THE ROGUE

Mark well the rogue! His smooth, unfaltering tongue,
His innocent smile, his speech that naught denies,
His nimble fancy quick with truth and lies,
His changeless cheek to blushes never stung;
He squanders flatteries and favors flung
Profusely round thick as July flings flies,
Aladdin tales, Münchausen prophecies,
And virtue's praise by snatches loudly sung;
He thinks—poor fool! to cozen laws as well
As men; cheat nature to forego her pains;
To win by fraud 'gainst cards of fact, and sell
His guilt for gold; then when despoiled of gains
And in the gutter rolled by angry fate
Gnashes on truth that him doth macerate.

HOMESTEAD

Now on the golden shield of capital
The roundhead Labor with unknightly sledge
Rings an intrepid challenge tragical
To battle for a prize of greater wage;
Rides forth Sir Capital with anxious grace
Himself at deadly risk of losing all,
Defies his scowling challenger, must face
The mad kern down or ruin both will gall;
Finds his antagonist a tedious foe,
Untrained to arms but muscled well and tough,
Unapt to flinch though cold and want bring woe,
While wife and children give him wrath enough;
The battle ended neither side has won;
Both finish poorer, heart-sore, spent, undone.

STRIKES

Redeemers ghostly have mankind adored
Who promised them release from swarming woes:
Confucius, Buddhas, Christs, Mahomets,—those
Who thought by teaching bliss could be restored;
Yet through man still sharp misery thrust his sword,
When from the masses a new champion rose—
Rough, noisy, stalwart, showering angry blows,
And crying “Fight for wage! swell labor’s hoard!”
Fired by his words men rallying fiercely fought
To win release through wages from duress,
Shoulder to shoulder ranked their files and brought
The averted world to admire their steadfastness;
Yet want still haunts the striker’s starving brood—
Larger production only can his woes preclude.

CULPA

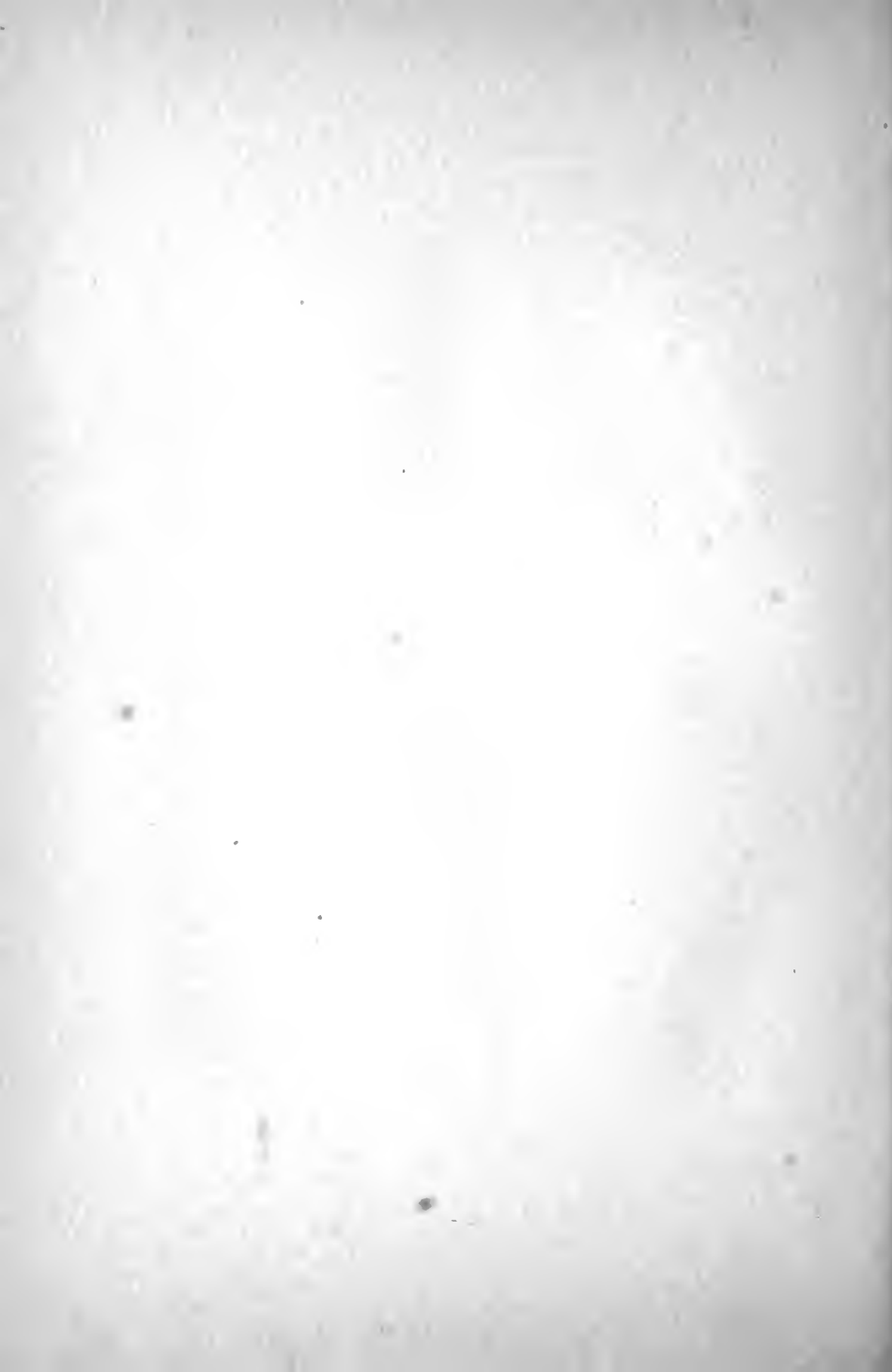
Released by wealth from struggles all severe
For mere subsistence, gilded youth forsake
The thoughts and toils that did their affluence make,
And to distempered sports give time and ear;
So leave the masses to old miseries drear,
Nor lend the costlier training of their mind
To solve hard problems for the dull and blind,
But rather scorn them as beneath their sphere.
Far better were it, would they but devote
Their easier lives to man's distressed estate,
Thinking for masses they beneath them note,
With helpful pity for their battered fate.
But schooled in games they now too often muss
Man's sober questions when they them discuss.

THE SPECULATOR

Man of a prophet's foresight most maligned,
And like all prophets scorned as profitless,
Who rather looks before him than behind,
He finds his pleasure in a studied guess.
The slow-worm seeing his fantastic mind
Looks as an ass upon the panther's spring,
And laughs within his stupid brain to find
One so uncertain, risky, wandering;
Till when the speculator bold succeeds,
And counts his skekels where himself counts pence,
Then "thief and pirate" bawls, nor ever heeds
That foresight's fulness gives lean sloth offence.
Loud laughs Success elate with his delights,
And snaps his fingers at cross envy's wights.

THE CAVALIER

Notes of romance about the cavalier
Play like bird-songs round yeoman at the plough
In fresh-turned furrows, giving his career
A graceful charm, which wins us even now
'Gainst roundheads rude, whose austere discipline
Bore down nice dukes and princes, and brought life
To coarser commons; worth out-battled wine,
Sad Cromwells foiled gay Ruperts in the strife.
For those flush king's-men bright with madrigals
And flowing ringlets, perfumed, airy, brave,
Caught on the swords of fierier principles,
With their false sovereign found a bloody grave;
Minstrel, fine nobles, and silk-stockinged court
Yield place in battle to the ironside sort.



Sport



KINGS' REVIEWS

Kings parade their soldiery for brother kings,
As brindled tigers at their fellows smile
Baring their threat of gleaming teeth, the while,
For cheer or menace in their junketings;
Pompous their rifled ranks,—these underlings
Glittering like myrmidons in polished file,
Though much like playthings for a juvenile,
And barely civil when one thinks of things;
Such is the foppery of the childish earth,
That scarcely yet men see the ampler strength
And larger empire that would come to birth
Where workmen trained, not warriors; then at length
Warriors would show like tawdry harlequins,
Or droop-mouthed bloodhounds mid clean citizens.

YACHTING

What frolic pleasure in the hollow sides
Of a trim yacht may find its costly home!
Its wings outspread on any breeze to roam
Towards any coast swept by th' alternate tides;
Who to her keeping his stout soul confides
Drinks airy gladness in the blown sea-foam,
And nightly arch of heaven's star-spangled dome,
While she on yeasty billows dips and rides;
And when a captive to freebooter gales
She whirls away to unknown waters cast,
While the gray master's cunning scarce avails
To keep her sea-way mid the surges vast,
Still will the yachtsman in his riotous fight
Scarce envy landsman safe, though dire his plight.

BASEBALL

In Cæsar's Rome they glowered on that fell game
Where Gaul and Goth hacked till red life-blood flowed,
And o'er the butchery in mad pleasure glowed
With thumb averted e'en the vestal dame;
Now toward the diamond, not for gore aflame,
Our crowding citizens take the dusty road,
Nor praise dishonor though defeat should goad,
But each foul play of either team will blame;
'T is but a lightning ball from pitcher's base
To batsman flung with twisted cunning sly;
A club that flashes, then a headlong race,
While wild hurrahs from throats ten thousand cry;
The tiger dies from hearts where tradesmen rule,
Though growling still where war-lord monarchs fool.

THE BOAT RACE

NEW LONDON, 1892

Eight brawny athletes stripped to nature's buff,
More like Rome's gladiators than students pale,
Sit in a light shell flagged for alma Yale
To row eight muscled Harvards of like stuff;
Swift at the word their oars the waters cuff,
And bend as one their sun-tanned bodies hale
To lusty strokes, that make an ashen gale,
Hurling thin prows through waters smooth and rough;
Then to and fro their shoulders flash like steel!
One thought, ambition, purpose all controlling,
They hotly urge the wave-dividing keel
Mid maddening cheers and cannons' boom on-rolling;
Yale's swinging stroke is crowned with fresher bay,
While Harvard falters sore with new dismay.

FOOTBALL

Unblushing crowds, of college youth the flower,
Steeped in the culture of our generous day,
Gather to see the football's fearful play,
Where gentles throng—barbarians for the hour.
Eleven champions, shag-haired and dour,
Striding colossal to the perilous fray
Pit blue 'gainst yellow and black with ardor gay
To prove their prowess in the crashing stour.
Now range these athletes up; one rending shout
Cheers the young giants to the lusty fight;
Now back, now forward sways the writhing rout
Tho' wounds and death mix in the test of might;
Then who too gentle not to blow his horn
When fluttering fortune puts one team to scorn?

THE BICYCLE

A curious toy born of the children's play,
Skimming as swiftly as the swallow flies,
Steals on the world unlauded of the wise,
Unheralded, unvaunted, silently;
Its balanced wheel man's radius amplifies,
His social state expands in large array,
Makes to good neighbors souls remote and stray,
And with fresh thought through lonely hamlets hies.
The clownish circle of sequestered swains
It vivifies to clubs of social youth,
Who loosed from bondage to their ox-drawn wains
May meet and hear the later redes of truth;
And highways smoothed for their fleet journeying
The round globe with new friendship will enwring.



Virtues' Vices



CIRCE

That Circe, Beauty, having charms enthralling,
O'erpowers the enchanted world with spells so strong
That like the drunken, men though suffering long
Reel round her lovely feet with pains appalling,
For pictures, statues, temples, ever calling,
While bread, homes, garments, comfort still they lack,
And lacking perish, stretched on want's tough rack,
Unwitting what doth make life's trip so galling;
So Phidias, Raphael, Rembrandt looked around
Upon a ruck of wolves, goats, foxes, swine,
That fought and wallowed, while fair art was crowned;
So drugged were men with Beauty's mantling wine;
Yet still for Beauty's dizzy witcheries
They give their honor, riches, virtues, lives.

ECONOMY

Nursed at the dugs of poverty, the scant,
Uncertain fount of nature, grudging crone!
And nipped in many a blight of famine gaunt,
Man's much-maltreated tribes make plaintive moan,
And seek in parsimony a refuge sore
From dreaded stringencies that may assail;
Paring some pittance from their daily store
To hoard for straits when 'customed incomes fail;
So pinch the hungry flanks of life, and shrivel
Wan faces to worse-wrinkled misery;
And shrink their little to less by that mean drivell,
Where larger outlay larger gains would buy.
Not sparing but wise spending sows the seed
Of harvests growing to fruitage beyond need.

CONSCIENCE

A scowling tyrant oft is Conscience, who
Will drone dull vetoes as from angry skies
That learning, laughter, love, and change taboo
In favor of tradition's fantasies.
He glues the savage to his fetish-creed,
The Hindoo to his castes of various hate,
The Moslem to Mahomet's sterile screed;
Makes bigot, dunce and tory reprobate;
Oft drags to jail minds pleading to be free;
Bludgeons bold reason with the clubs of fear;
Handcuffs invention as his enemy,
And thumbscrews virtue with an unctious leer;
His voice is wrinkled custom's mumbling cry
Stifling the sweet babe's voice of novelty.

DUTY

How often Duty like a falcon fierce
Stoops down on Pleasure trimmed in plumage gay
And rends her beauteous gauds all furiously,
While to the heart his merciless beak doth pierce!
Then with a strident voice infuriate
He screams harsh orders, which whoe'er obey
Will fall to black despondency a prey,
And curse bleak life with unrelenting hate.
The lissom dance and music's gleeful strain,
Love's fiery yearning, field-sport's manly strife,
The drama's recreation, all have lain
In Duty's talons bleeding out their life;
So when this falcon screams his savagery,
As birds from hawks, to Castle Joyance fly!

IKON

“’T is love that makes the world go round!” cry some
Brave poets lost in fools’ felicities;
A rougher despot hath this world to please
Whose strident voice shouts courteous gallants dumb;
Its charioteer is no curled lover come
With dalliance sweet and thrilling minstrelsies,
But whip-in-hand with autocrat decrees,
That lightly reck of love’s delirium.
His name? Necessity! Whistles his lash
O’er lovers all, that bids them dance his tune,
Turn sailors, traders, soldiers for bare cash;
Blows bickering March through lovers’ balmy June.
His are the hands that drive the steeds of fate
Knouting mankind to toils inveterate.

CELIBACY

Pale, bloodless daughter of ungenerous reins,
Whose dry defiance to flush nature’s fires
Hath caught men’s whimsy spite the fact that sires
Of ruddier hue gave each his flesh and veins!
What freakish craze is that which chaunts the strains
Of laud to bare negation of desires
As pleasing God whose lusty world aspires
To swarm with life,—life that of death complains!
Yet church and state have crowned thy flowerless snows
With solemn consecrations, idle saint!
As were thy barrenness some precious rose
Of worth because without love’s luscious taint.
But nature thy sterility abhors
And rather gloats o’er ways of sensual boors.

TROY AND TO-DAY

As great Achilles won the highest fame
By slaying glorious Hector spent with fight,
And dragging his dead body, without shame,
Around Troy's walls, within his townsmen's sight,
While they grief-smitten wailed most bitterly;
So is it oft upon the plains of life
Chief aim and triumph of man's industry
To kill his foe and drag him from the strife
Dishonored, soiled with dust before the eyes
Of friends and lovers torn with grief who wail.
Victors with swelling words their crime disguise,
Jeering at pity with their ruffians' tale;
Then babbling ages hymn the braggart's praise
Though he have slain the glory of his days.

Vices' Virtues



SELFISHNESS

Thou sneaking pick-purse of the social state
That loiterest everywhere with outheld dish,
Intent on alms or stealings, bread or fish,
Engorging all that comes, or soon, or late!
Thou art a poor blind, fool insatiate
Who makest a world averted to thy wish,
And gracious men toward thee but winterish;
Thy shrewd disguise serves but a short-lived date!
One thing thou doest of nature's prime behest,—
Thyself thou keepest from complete decay!
Self-preservation—law of worst and best—
Thou guardest well and so securest thy day!
But who would thrive, on that large plan will live
Which for all good received as good will give.

SELF-INTEREST

A busy craftsman and Prometheus-wise
Is keen self-interest that most sharply sees
To its own welfare, and then well contrives
Arts to attain it! Yet what hypocrisies
Play hide and seek this schemer to conceal.
As were he quite disgraceful, protests loud
Disclaim his clever guidance into weal,
As were he craftsman better disavowed:
But large self-interest is the shrewdest fool
That can direct the steps of blundering man;
Though oft misleading still he knows his goal,
Toils late and early to make good his plan;
Who rides without this leader for his course
Risks wild disasters to himself and horse.

SLANDER

Thou hast been hated as a poisonous snake,
A coiled, malignant rattler, quick to strike,
To every hateful impulse still awake,
That sparest no virtue, no good deed belike.
But thou art often as a hornet keen,
Whose buzzing flight acts as perpetual threat
To keep sly feet from straying when unseen
Towards paths of ill that aching griefs beset.
A lurking spy, fear of whose guile forbids
From boding ventures whence mean tongues might wag
To poison reputation earned with pains,
And open eyes whose watchfulness might lag.
Too oft indeed thou workest deadly ill,
As drugs that cure, too freely taken, kill.

ENVY

A passion much abhorred for hideous ill,
Whose hand doth stitch a curious-mottled thread
Into life's fabric, spun of thoughts that kill,
And broideries of guilty line blood-red
Is envy; yet its angry, murderous spleen
Oft kicks the leaden-witted clown to rouse
And win the goods that stirred his hatred keen,
Dragging to honors from his broken drowse;
Was 't not the laurels of Miltiades
Whose rustling galled, e'en when he fain had slept,
That man colossal, Greek Themistocles,
Till he the Persians from blue sea had swept?
Sooth! without envy men might be as slow
As fat, horned snails to gird their loins and go.

EXTRAVAGANCE

Free, silk-clad roysterer—distrusted sore
By men too miserly, who late have found
Thy lavish ways to be the key and door
To larger wealth—thou scatterest the ground
With germs of arts, inventions and all seeds of life!
How has the open radiance of thy face
Been scowled on by grim sages ever rife
With envious sneers against thy liberal grace!
Day laughs before thee, and beneath thy hand
The fields wax fertile; towns grow loud and thrive;
The hut dilates to palace, and void land
To human marts with bustling men alive.
Plenty, which swollen Nile to Egypt lends.
Thy prodigal floods oft bring to enrich thy friends.

REVENGE

Darkest of all the fiends that work to shape
The fashion of the world's face so austere,
Art thou, O fell Revenge! too fain to drape
In justice' stainless mask thy scowl severe.
Doubtless thy snaky locks and maniac glare
Have faltered rogues and frosted budding crimes,
When desperate ruffians, whom no law could scare,
Had else unleashed black horrors on the times.
Man, hulking animal and Caliban,
Like the gorilla framed, compact of mud,
Not easily is bred to gentleman,
Save his boor's temper first with spears be cowed.
But black Revenge with savage heart to kill
Blanches with terror his bloodthirsty will.

AVARICE

A fine, old-gentlemanly vice, whose turn
For solvency doth gild its hardness bright;
Nor is it foreign to a kind concern
For others' good, and has some notions right.
Not quite a flower, perhaps, nor yet all weed;
Since in its well-stored granaries men find
Seed for new harvests and a store to feed
Young enterprise. 'T were well to be assigned
As infant to some family tree which counts
One dreadful miser in its ancestry,
Whose parsimony left some large amounts
For his far-off descendents' wealth to be.
So might one have advantage in two kinds—
Of avarice dead, and liberal living minds.

HATRED

"Love all men!" cries the creed, but hatred knows
A part to play mid tortuous affairs,
That nerves the will to greater things than prayers
When evil men and evil deeds oppose.
'T were a sad world, were all the telling blows
Left for the bad to strike, while goodness stares,
And to the foe its smitten cheek still bares,
Till evil throw its body to the crows.
But hatred double-shots his guns, and fires
To kill his enemies, both man and cause,
To bury fathoms deep them and their ires,
Or with a scowling brow their threats o'erawes.
Shielded by Ajax Teucer shot his bow—
Oft virtue must use hatred's valor so.

GREED

A thirst for gain will sometimes parch a soul
Till, like Sahara 'neath the Afric sun,
'T is burned to arid waste, where flourish none
Of human virtues; truth nor love control,
Nor groweth any fruit that men extol.
Therefore from good Saint Paul hath sharp greed won
Ill name as "root of evil" where begun;
Which doth the lazy for greed's gains console.
Yet greed doth spur to vast activity,
Whirls laggard axles to a smoking speed,
Spreads bellying canvas on the farthest sea,
And saddles thought to serve complaining need.
Where none are greedy, no one moves on want
To drive that lean marauder from man's haunt.

THE GAMBLER

A pirate well disguised mid fleets that ply
With precious merchandise from port to port,
That spreads his snares with guileful industry.
Is the sleek gambler ruthless in his sport.
Forlornest creature that breathes wholesome air,
A social Ishmael, his selfish hand
'Gainst every man is lifted, foul or fair.
To him all friendship is a rope of sand;
Like the still pike mid minnows in a lake,
He feigns to drowse as if indifferent;
Then sudden like a javelin darts to take
Some vagrant fool on vacuous errand bent.
No comrade for his ruin ever weeps,
Nor grieves a mourner when his false soul sleeps.

DIVORCE

How harsh a discord, as of dog and bear
Tied by one galling cord within a ring,
Is that of man and wife whose daily fare
Is bread and wine of strife embittering!
Love soured to hate is such acute displeasure
As cannot bide in cool indifference,
But frets and chafes against the quondam lover
Till even endearments kindle fresh offence.
But dog and bear given unrestrained release
Go each his rambling way in carelessness;
So these twain severed frisk in jocund peace,
Like singing jongleurs 'scaped from sour duress.
Life has too many thorns of nature's rearing
For laws to add a new one past all bearing.

THE WIT OF WEALTH

Quick praise gets wit when its surprises flash
Like a keen sword-blade whirled in jovial play
To light a table whose replete array
Assures the speaker's amplitude of cash;
But when ill-clad wit snaps his dangerous lash
The dull pretentiousness of fools to flay,
A scurvy welcome meets his bright display,
Where shallow coxcombs every sally dash;
And if more genial be wit's merry vein,
Neglected laughs its penniless, beaming face,
Where half a jest from Midas' starveling brain
Provokes a laughter would fresh woe erase;
The wit of Midas glitters with his gold
Where wit ungilded gets a north wind cold.

IGNORANCE

ANNO DOMINI 1000

When dead low tide has left sea beaches bare,
And ragged rocks deformed with smearing ooze,
Mud-stranded barks their watery freedom lose
Careened mid sea-fronds rotting in the air;
What frowzy look the littered beaches wear
Strown with torn shells which lazy waves refuse,
And gray-green rushes moldy with salt dews!
Such were the days—days of unclean despair—
When science's sparkling tides had ebbed away
And left man sprawling in slug-harboring mire
Befouled with filthy superstition's spray;
While half-drowned reason gasped 'mid refuse dire,
And minds were smothered 'neath the bitter slime
That else had flashed like sunbursts o'er their time.

WELT-SCHMERZ

One cry of ages is a note of woe,
Both man and animal have faces sad,
Since battered of rough nature did all go
Till nimble-witted men learned laughter glad;
Which waxeth to a fashion now apace,
Till gleams of frequent merriment will run
Through most transactions of the Aryan race,
Gilding e'en sombre arts with sparkling fun.
The bright Caucasian so has changed his look
From sombre masks of aborigines
He seems not of the same ancestral stock,
By crinkling laughter raised to gay degrees.
For man's primeval visage of despair
Grows debonair when comfort strokes his hair.



Philosophy



PHILOSOPHY

High substitute for faith, thy genial strain
Can deeply solace sore humanity,
Amid the falling of the bitter rain
That beats oft harshly on all lives that be.
The gusts of passion dost thou check with smiles,
With hopes dost smooth the wrinkled brow of care,
With humor baffle folly's tedious wiles
And enmities disarm with gracious air!
Thou, lofty friend of man with mien elate!
The peace of sanguiné strength dost give to me,
Assuaging grief 'mid fortunes desperate,
And showing sunshine o'er a stormy sea.
Thy tranquil eyes restore my courage when
My small world goes awry amidst of men.

SIN'S SIN

If to indulge the love of sin be sin,
Then am I sin's most helpless bounden slave;
For though I sin not, yet I would not win
Full victory o'er the wish to misbehave;
But if to fight loved sin be virtue's crown,
Then am I laurelled with her fullest leaf;
For every day I turn my bad wish down,
Though every moment its defeat brings grief.
So sin's desire indulged doth aye contend
With sin resisted, to decide if I
Am sinner lost or saint to be revered
At that high court which doth all guilt descry;
For whether 't is more sinful sin to love,
Than saintly not to do, how can one prove?

HAPPINESS

Sought of all men is happiness, real aim
Of love and marriage, strife and toil and play;
It goads to ventures, lures to fame and shame,
Tempts fool and wise man each his chosen way;
Each in his objects seeks it, when in truth
'T is like a hare of which the hunt is more
Than is the capture; little sport forsooth
Has he who lounges idle round his door;
Our powers set on to something worth their strain
Rouse the swift soul to such supernal joy
That scarce it matters whether one attain
The ends which his activities employ;
For busy souls may die in ecstasies
Though nought be caught of all they spurred to seize.

IDEALS

When o'er night-oceans throbs a steamer fast
Tossing the starry spray starward in showers,
Oft Dian rising scatters silver flowers
Across its pathway on the darkling vast;
So driving forward from our troubled past
Through towering surges that defy our powers,
We see waves silvered midst of sullen hours
With rays of splendor from ideals cast;
Sparkling their glimmer round our dull careers,
Though less substantial than lost friends in dreams,
They cheer us onward 'midst the clash of fears
Towards futures brilliant in their ghostly gleams;
Frail phosphorescence! most ideals made real
Prove but thin moonshine; real 's the true ideal.

ATTITUDE

Some fume and fret the genial years away;
Some gloom clear skies foreboding rainy hours;
Some sharp misfortune curdles, or wholly sours;
And many keep an angry tryst with day;
'T is better with bright thoughts to make delay,
To gild the hateful, baptize weeds to flowers,
Call drenching rains the skirts of passing showers,
And each defeat an unimportant fray;
Make what one must to what one always would;
Treat hateful tasks as goodly exercise
In manly arts involving what one should;
So in each *melée* conquer some small prize;
Without such make-believe life's harrowing care
Might chill all months with climates of despair.

DEPRESSION

Sometimes athwart a bright September day
Blue haze will creep, enwrapping its cool light
In veils that thicken till they baffle sight,
While shivering winds swoop down on hill and bay;
So o'er hale spirits blithe with jollity
May creep eclipsing glooms with plumes of night,
From nothing's cave emerging recondite,
But chilling mirth to haggard misery;
Yet give not place to bodings born of whim!
The mists will flee, and other suns be clear!
Take what time brings! Fill to its mantling brim
Life's only cup! Cry "Hail, all Hail, good cheer!"
Despair is but an ebb of nervous tide!
'T will yield to flood! forego thy suicide!

HOPE

How long above a swift ship's writhing wake
The sea-gull hovers without faltering,
Though all the winds of Eolus loosed may fling
The bitter spray aloft and fiercely shake
The bark's stiff shrouds; like any white snow-flake
She rides the blasts that ever shriek or sing;
So doth the soul—a bird of ghostlier wing—
Most rueful weathers in its world-flight take
And still on vans of hope the stress o'er-soar,
With energies that moult no feather of their quill;
Trusting some fairy e'er brown locks grow hoar
Will bring it safe to fortune's shining hill;
And though oft missing its supreme intents
Finds its anticipations goodly recompense.

INVOLUTION

With every hour life complicates its course,
Drawing our fortunes in as warp and woof.
Till each one's liberty is lost perforce
In the close fabric of the world's behoof;
The lad at school naught complex feels in fate,
The lover counts as slight its silken chain;
The husband, father, master, finds too late
His powers laced close, all chance of freedom vain,
And still on every side he's meshed anew,
Till hands, feet, tongue, eyes, ears, and soul are fast;
His hours bespoken, notes are always due,
And every movement harnessed to the past;
The growing tangle spins round brain and heart
Till death's shears closing snip all knots apart.

MAN IN NATURE

Nature brings man to birth, indifferent
If it suits him or no, or what he tries;
She gives a skin in which he smiles or cries,
But lends no clothing briars to circumvent;
Provides no shelter from the lightning's flame,
No 'scape from earthquake, from dread plagues no ward,
Bestorms with elemental terrors hard,
And deaf to curse or prayer works on the same.
No chance hath he to find felicity,
Save as he masters well her methods rude,
Wrings private use from her indifferent play
And fashions good from her raw plenitude;
Who frets 'gainst nature frets as might wolf's cub
Against his dam's rough peltry in the scrub.

RIGHT AND BEST

'T were better far and saving of much wrong
That one should steer his team of aim and wit
Not by the fancied certainty so strong
Of "This is right, I must adhere to it,"
But rather by the less coercing rule
Of "This is best so far as I can see,"
Which far more subtly guides the human mule
Than fighting his infallibility;
For then would many a strife rein in its wrath,
And fierce disputes draw hard the cautious curb,
Bold dogma falter on its twilight path,
And reason's lamp be lit where doubts disturb;
When right sets his stiff horn to push his way,
Gored reason bleeding finds no word to say.

MATERIALISM

Ages men spent upon their vaporous souls,
Making poor progress in a human way;
Now all concern to earthly things they pay,
And speed like racers toward the noblest goals.
Yet cry the dreamers: "These are days of moles,
All men are grubbing with a muck-rake base,
Oblivious of the lordlier aims that raise
True souls toward heaven above earth's wretched doles;
This crass material spirit ruins man!"
O fools and blind! that see not how past days
Were poor and prostrate, slaves to phantoms wan,
Because man wandered down those ghostly ways
Where guidance was but guesswork; and no soul
Regarded earthly good as an all-worthy goal.

FACT AND FAIRY

Dearly we love the fairy realm where thought
By fancy winged takes aimless flights through air,
In butterfly courses glancing everywhere,
Ignoring reason and the eternal ought;
Then prince or princess we step forth with naught
To question claims to gifts beyond compare;
We walk as Cræsus, Samsons, Solons, there,
Young, handsome, great, in love and all-besought;
Poor ploughman fact is 'mid these fairies hated;
Intruding clown that sweet illusion sours;
Avaunt coarse caitiff! here thou art not waited!
Only fair falsehoods fit these elfin hours!
But fairies flee when morning's lark upsprings,
And fact drives ploughshares through their ruined rings.

CHANCE

As in an acorn hid from curious eyes
A great oak nestles cunningly infolded,
Which years may blight, or lift to favoring skies
To spread its antlered boughs by storm-winds molded,
So was on Nilus' flood, one long gone date,
Amid thick bulrushes carefully concealed,
In baby Moses Israel's sacred state
Which his rare leadership to light revealed;
So once in Genoa's port unguessed of men
Our new world's destiny played unconcerned,
The sport of countless accidents that then
Had power to quench and leave it undiscerned.
How many a nascent genius may foul chance
Have in its cradle choked to impotence!

WORD-CRAFT

Bright scholars trained to the choice craft of words
In their fine jugglery lost ignore that things
As different are from words as singing birds
From pictured wild-fowl wrought in garnishings;
Then lead they through a maze of shadow-dances
Their weightless phantoms, counterfeits of men,
Whose wild-wood freedom like a charm entrances
Child, youth and maid, and sober citizen;
Their glittering words oft wreckers' lights become,
Misguiding barks that fare o'er reef-strewn seas,
And many a good ship rots 'mid fishes dumb,
By reckless authors drawn toward treacherous lees;
Yet men give fine words worship though they lie
In love with phrases' fatal phantasy.

PITH

How weak are words, though most in evidence,
To make society or good or great!
Since deeds build social order, greaten the state,
Give root to morals, arts, intelligence;
Demosthenes may hearten Greek defence
In hot orations matchless for debate,
But Greece is ruined while he still doth prate,
Where grand Themistocles by violence
Had vanquished mightier foes of earlier time;
So not smooth orators nor statesmen wise,
Nor churches, journals, schools, nor books sublime
Build the strong bulwark that assault defies;
Enduring states are all of deeds compact,
Words graceful shadows playing round wrought fact.

ALTERNATIVE

Twin artists deft whom Yes and No we call
Paint changeful hues of every life we see,
In tints that please, or tones that later gall,
With firm, quick stroke depicting each decree;
Whate'er our thought these craftsmen stand alert
To signal every judgment open or hid,
Whether it make for credit or for hurt
It still goes down, nor can the stars forbid.
Like grows the portrait as the faithful years
Lay stroke on stroke, till every man stands drawn
And pictured in his history; whence appears
His fate and fortune—often woebegone;
For Yes or No to wisely cry is clever,
And most are bunglers that scarce hit it ever.

OUR OVERLORDS

Two rightful lords hath life, and both are liege,
Love hight the one, and Lucre his born twin;
Both reign, Love in the heart with high prestige,
But Lucre elsewhere to Love's deep chagrin.
As queen and king these twain in reverence held,
Both honored, heeded, served make bright one's fate,
But either disobeyed one's peace is knelled,
And good days doomed to terms that lacerate.
Who Love despises risks a life forlorn,
Who Lucre scorns risks life each day debased,
And which is worse need no one well discern,
Since both are woeful, each a different waste.
Fanatic liegemen 'twixt these twain put strife,
But both bear sceptres, both wear crowns of life.

CORRESPONDENCE

A crested surge breaks on the reef in spray,
Breaks on the eye in waves of glancing light,
Breaks on the unseen brain in further flight,
And breaks to thought within its matter gray,
Whose reflux wave may prompt its lord to weigh
Giant Arcturus in the starry night,
Or kindle patriot to a bolder fight,
Or start explorer on some fearsome way;
So by th' eternal interchange of waves
Mere matter stirs the answering sea of mind,
To be in turn tormented in its caves
By viewless thoughts as by a chafing wind;
For all the universe one motion thrills,
The same in circling orbs and viewless wills.

NARROW-MINDEDNESS

Small, narrow minds like rocky throats to streams
Constrict the foaming torrents of great souls
That nature pours through human loins, nor dreams
Them dangerous,—sent to float the fools;
But narrow minds will strangle household joy;
Slay Romeos and Juliets with passionate pride;
Red and white roses for hate's badge employ;
And creeds of love to screeds of strife misguide;
How brightly flows the river of wide thought
Flashing between low banks of liberty,
Its tranquil bosom with all treasures fraught,
The hopes, the works, the joys of men mind-free!
Through sunless gorges sends the narrow mind
Its shrill-complaining streams black-hued and blind.

METAPHYSIC

Stout is the thrall of metaphysic thread,
That tangles facts and binds thin logic's school
To theses barren as a convent's rule,
Or the fixed vassalage of a leader dead.
Who yields his mind will live by phrase, instead
Of breezy thoughts born of the living times,
Wear ancient virtues turned to modern crimes,
And strangle truth with views inherited.
But fact now trips up logic; reasoners
Go down before the shots of brisk reality;
Inventors brain slow schoolmen; quick need stirs
To do what theorists deny can be;
Them no fact moves; as at her anchor chain
A moored bark rides, so they hear winds in vain.

MONOTONY

As croons a reedy bagpipe on the ear
With even, buzzing note that on and on
Makes melancholy plaint, and life more drear;
Or as a bee's incessant undertone,
When in a chamber prisoned he declares
His tiny terror, longing for free sky,
And bruises on the ceiling as he fares
Declaiming to all earth his misery;
So is monotony's all-wearying thrum,
The iterate sound of custom's sentinel tread,
That paralyzes action and wears dumb
Hope's ringing voice to expectations wed;
Slowly life's music turns a mumbling drone
More deadly than disaster's thunder-tone.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

When stripling David ruddy-cheeked and bold,
Raw from the hills, strode forth with sling and stone
To dare Philistia's braggart huge of bone,
Whose brawny hand a beamy spear controlled,
He but prefigured in his limber mold
New truth's unarmored champions, who unknown
Defy armed giant Prejudice, alone,
And at his forehead fling facts, missiles cold.
Ever are Israel's armies small though staunch,
Ever within their tents withdrawn and slow;
Till some young gallant stout of heart dare launch
The hurtling word that lays mailed Error low.
Then to their David raise they pæans loud,
And charging rout Philistia's heathen crowd.



Sleep and Death



SLEEP

By day, a prowling animal, man walks
The earth, inventive, masterful, and shrewd;
Riots in love, ambition, force, and talks
Of gods as waiting on his wilful mood;
By night unconscious in deep sleep he sinks
Back to a foot-bound plant *sans* thought, *sans* will,
One with ancestral flora; trailed by links
Towards paltry sorrel, and poor daffodil.
Such floral slumbers mark his cousinhood,
Hint whence he sprang, and what his kind, ere yet
The nursing years had given him veins and blood
To make full man what erst was seaweed wet;
Microbe's, plant's, animal's epitome
He sums earth's life in his life's history.

SLEEP AND DEATH

Sleep rosy in his beauty binds with chains
Ambitious, lordly man wrapped in a spell
That locks each feeling prisoner in his cell,
And every muscle of his force distrains;
Death pale as snow in tighter bonds detains
All motion, passion, hope, and warm desire,
Dispels from hearts the terror of things dire,
And every wretch benumbs to dreaded pains;
Sleep oft his bonds unbinds and leaves his ward
To new exposures full of dangers grim;
Death like a sentry keeps perpetual guard,
Nor can assault coerce the spear of him;
Yet men who woo sound sleep's forgetfulness
Death's sounder sleep shun as the worst distress.

ETERNAL LIFE

Were it a boon forever to explore
The long-drawn weariness and trite routine
Of an existence aged to the core
Whose stale experience makes the new day mean?
Not few are they on whom our few years pall,
Who tire of life's capricious changeful weathers;
Nor few who drugged with pleasure loudly call
Slow death to cut them loose from earthly tethers;
So they who promise everlasting hours
And cycles endless but surcharge our woe;
Existence for ten decades numbs our powers,—
Who then through eons could endure to go?
But to lie down and cease all quietly
Were 't not a finish most would like to be?

AFTER AND BEFORE

What if 't were true that death were dreamless sleep,
Wherein the riotous flesh and sprightly soul
Should find their last and everlasting goal
In the concealing grave's untroubled heap!
The bare suggestion sends a shudder deep
Through every recess of the frightened spirit,
Threat'ning the joy of all that we inherit,
As did some masked assassin toward us creep.
Yet let us think, how we knew no heart-beat,
Being yet ungathered dust that felt no thrill,
When Rome fell prostrate neath Alaric's feet
Or Washington held Cornwallis at his will;
As little should we, dead and once interred,
By all earth's wondrous clangor be perturbed.

LETHE

What ails thee Death, that men should curse thy ways?
Kind Nurse! Thy poppy drowsier than sleep
The aching flesh doth soothe and sweetly steep
In baths of painlessness; whom strife doth craze
Thou bringest peace like Indian summer days;
Who hath sown ill by thee escapes to reap;
Who much are wronged through thee may cease to weep;
And who are banned lose care for blame or praise.
Yet men abhor thee utterly! and bear
Time's rack and torture, go blind, deaf, lame, old,
To shun thy quietude; craving still to share
Earth's sunshine longer 'mid griefs manifold;
Yet at the last all nestle to thy breast
Like tired children to a cradled rest.

NIRVANA

Were there no death to open exit sure
From life's perplexity and restless fret,
Who could the nagging tongue of time endure,
Its voice reproachful, its o'erwise regret?
Now through death's open window we outpeer
Into its brooding silence without break,
That like a balm o'erbreathes the nerves of fear
And like a music bids us care forsake.
Were no such window pierced, did we but find
Ourselves time's prisoners, shut up in flesh
For aye, with its perpetual ills unkind,
Who could his soul from such a bane refresh?
But now as busy day looks toward night's peace
We living glance toward death's unbought release.

IMMORTALITY

Dream of the dreamer who forgets earth's rack,
Blowing gay bubbles of the glorious fates
Awaiting him beyond the comet's track,
Like one who, scorning thousands, millions waits!
The church hangs round it painted tapestries,
Wherein hell's flames and heaven's delights are wrought
In colored threads of ancient fable-dyes
Of signs and saints, and what its God hath thought.
But broidered screens display no living things,
Nor can grave church make quick her figured truth;
We know for all his gaily painted wings
The cherub is no living child forsooth;
And what avails, though set with large display,
Such picture-piece of immortality?

THE MORGUE

Lo! nature to herself resumes for long
The house she leased its tenant for life's course—
The straight, full figure delicately strong,
The pliant muscles stored with mobile force.
This now is as a sculptured sea-shell cast
Upon the strand for waves to pulverize,
As little heeded for its greater past,
As is a pauper for his ancestries.
Yet subtle forces builded up its powers,
Gave luminous beauty to its face of mind,
Gave tireless heart to beat the sequent hours,
Gave flexile limbs in finest lines designed.
Millions of such doth nature yearly fashion,
And other millions serve with dispossession.

PESTILENCE

Dread fury, whose insatiable maw
Devours the tender folk as frost the flowers!
Art thou an angel sent from heavenly towers
To spread destruction as King David saw?
Ah, no! No longer God's revengeful law
Chastising sinners for their jocund hours
We see, but rather filth's envenomed powers
That catch at life through each unguarded flaw;
Our minds we call the poisonous thing to slay,
Not in the hope of supernatural aid
To bring us victory in our keen foray,
But trusting to our wit's thrice-sharpened blade;
Destroying angels have but scanty chance
When matched with men who give no tolerance.



Schoolmen



MEPHISTO

That skeptic demon, Mephistopheles
The questioner, hath snared our prosperous age
With jesting at the faith-philosophies
That in duress held earlier hind and sage;
Little he recks of *Credos* old or new,
Trusting his brave thoughts of the universe;
Snaps his blithe fingers at church-threats of rue,
And laughs that pleasure hath no primal curse;
So singing, shouting, round our highways stirs,
Scattering blue devils with his airy mirth,
Locks up the cloisters, opens theatres,
Sends daily journals to the humdrum hearth;
Empties the Pantheon of fancy's gods,
And gives to common reason motor roads.

CORNER-STONES

For perfect trust naught is so good a base
As myths fantastic and impossible,
Which when baptized as "mysteries" outface
Reason's five wits, and fact's well-proved apostle.
As "sacred" soar above the scrutiny
Of curious critics who their claims might question;
As "God-inspired" quite frankly can defy
Mere argument as skeptics' vile suggestion.
As "God's own Word" they threaten awful ruin
To who their character investigates,
And solemnly denounce as truth's assassin
Who point out errors in their predicates.
No broom yet made will brush a fog away;
So myth disproved re-closes on the day.

CREDULITIES

Are not all faith's credulities embalmed
In pungent spices of perturbing fears,
With curse and bogie to the pale lips crammed,
Old folk-lore tales by firelight crooned? One hears
Their far ancestral gossip babbled low
From nurse to babe, from sire to wide-eyed son,
As solemn truth and questionless, that no
Good soul may doubt lest it should be undone.
Yet men have lost their faiths without the loss
Of aught that made their day-times glorious,
And thrown off with them many a heavy cross
Which tortured hearts with pangs notorious.
Retreating myths like any mist exhaling
Let in glad sunshine braver souls regaling.

SEEKERS AFTER GODS

Who seeks for gods will find them without fail;
An hundred or a dozen shall he find,
Or all he will; incarnate, or pure mind;
In trinity or sole; female or male;
Fathers with sons whom safely none assail;
A virgin, mother, child, by love enshrined;
No thought too wild, nor none too blind
To fashion gods of—gross or in detail.
And each alike is potent; lives and reigns
Supreme and loved by throngs of worshippers;
Armed cap-a-pie to butcher who disdains
To serve their god and other god prefers.
Before his own each trembles, worships, bows,
While each the other scoffs and disavows.

SECTS

Caught by unproved assertions reckless, bold,
Men think their safety lies within the pale
Of their hereditary sect, whose special phrase
Both priest and church declare has sure avail.
Many their claims, each as his mother taught:
"The Church," cries one; another, "Baptism right";
A third, "Conversion" with salvation fraught;
A fourth, "The Sacraments" have saving might.
What furious hubbub rises from the throng!
Each will convince another, each is sure
His is the true way to the immortal song,
His leads to heaven and peace that will endure.
And reason asking "Wherefore say you so?"
Gets answers many as down seeds that blow.

BUDDHA

"Om mani," drones the Buddhist, "padmi houm."
Oh, the jewel in the lotus hidden!
Nor why he cries it knows, nor why 't is bidden
It to cry, nor what he cries; on the loom
Of ages woven, piety gives it room;
'Mid magic, mystic phrases it is cherished
As a charm, where meaning words had perished;
Such is its sacred, talismanic doom.
Like is its spell with "Aves," "Paters," scattered
In dead tongues by reasonless devotees;
Or the "Allah illah allah," pattered
By pale set lips of Muslim dervishes.
"Jewels in the lotus hidden" serve as well
As other phrase to save good souls from hell.

CALVINISM

A network tough, as 't were of hammered steel,
With mesh of complex ignorance devised
To wind men in its web of things unreal
And verbal tangles by its prisoners prized,
Did Calvin forge in his despotic brain;
And as once Vulcan in a cunning trap
Did Mars with Venus for the gods detain,
So thought he love divine with wrath t'enwrap.
And long as men gave faith to mysteries,
Where premise, reasoning, and conclusion were
Shielded from wit and warfare by new pleas
'Gainst human reason, bide they in the snare.
But many-weaponed knowledge sets thought free
And rends the logic network hopelessly.

THE PURITAN

Strange product of a melancholy creed,
Framed like its articles to thoughts austere,
His days fell lowering as a clouded mere,
Mistaking gloom for duty, flower for weed;
What sombre passion could him so mislead
That he should blacken nature, and her cheer
Look gruffly on, scowling at pleasure dear
In dread that she his finer life should bleed?
Were soul worth saving at such precious cost
Of time's short hours deformed with tedious groans,
While earth's vast splendor was accounted dross,
And man's great secular movement seen with moans?
His work as Puritan has paled of late,
His work as freeman still keeps good the state.

THE QUAKER

A man sincere in narrow lines we see;
In uncouth garb, on which he lays deep stress,
The good Friend goes protesting against dress;
Of curious speech hard-strained to "thou" and "thee,"
Protesting against artifice goes he;
The spirit's freedom he in words doth bless,
But holds such freedom must his views express,
So keeps his way in calm persistency.
To the deep silence of his soul confined,
Secluded from the stormy world's debate,
He listens for Heaven's voice to guide him blind,
As were't a task for gods on him to wait.
Yet such success doth not with his work run
As clearly shows Almighty supervision.

THE SHAKER

Grotesque believer in a God distraight,
Whose creature, man, was foolishly designed
To reproduce his unregenerate kind,
In hopes the race might stop itself some day
By curious abnegation of that way!
How limps thy worship in these scornful times,
When thy fantastic dance seems like old mimes,
Or Indian wizard's fetish mimicry!
Are queer ancestral whimsies troubling thee,
Obscure remembrances stored away in nerve
By years when, fumbling round in savagery,
The rude barbarian used such rites to observe?
But what a drought ye start in our spare lot,
Who love and wealth salute with "Thou shalt not"!

THE SECTARY

As grows the unsightly cactus stiff and bare
With prickly spines and graceless stalk of green
Above a sandy waste wherein is seen
No grass nor shrub but only wide despair,
So grows the sectary upon the fair
Green fields of nature which his creed makes mean,
Rejecting generousities and e'en
Sweet friendships and love's comradeships so rare
And laughter's gleeful face and music's quires.
So stands amid the waste his thoughts have made,
A grim endurance parched with torrid fires,
Though time had proffered palms and elms of shade;
Then o'er life's bareness drones a lying moan,
Not seeing the blight is his, and his alone.

LIBERAL CHRISTIANS

In vain good Christian spreads his sail to thought,
In vain courts freshening breezes of the time
Since he is chained, as poet to his rhyme,
Chained to an ancient name and page with naught
To mold our day wherein new truth is sought.
About his mooring round and round he spins,
And thinks because he changes place, he wins
A voyage forward as good seamen ought.
And much he fusses reefing in worn sails,
New rent by new gales fresh from modern schools,
Hoisting patched canvas that no whit avails
Save for bold show, to keep moth-eaten rules.
A spinning top as soon will win a race
As he, still humming round the same old base.

THE AGNOSTIC

How strange, that to avow one's ignorance,
Where all in blanket-darkness blindly grope,
Should lasso one as with a herdsman's rope
Of shy distrust, while hardy insolence
Of any bigotry gives less offence!
Yet has our ignorance the widest scope,
Since knowledge finds short limits inside hope;
Nor can the wisest tell us plainly, whence
We came to being on this casual globe,
Nor whither go when from our place we drop,
Slipping from out this radiant flesh, our robe;
Or if we go at all and do not merely stop.
This know all well, but to outspcak it loud
Puts the confessor under social cloud.



Fairy Land



SPIRIT

Is spirit but the fairy name of what
Grows quick through grouping of material powers?
Once was it thought to dwell in streams, stars, showers,
A living person housed in grove, or grot,
Of human strain but greater; 't is our lot
To have discovered that this fancied being
Is but the creature of imperfect seeing,
And that in every place a spirit still is not.
May not all spirits, demon, god, or man,
Alike fade out from every human creed?
Since these like other spirits never can
Their separate being prove by separate deed.
Then may mankind its highest good discover
To lie in nature,—his eternal lover.

SIN

Portentous goblin horned and hoofed and tailed,
Sired out of Terror by swart Ignorance,
The nightmare Sin has ridden man who wailed
O'er fen and brier—a madman's frantic dance;
Then coward he, by ghoulish imps bestrid,
Has rushed on hideous crimes his soul to purge,
Tortured his flesh, slain wife and child unbid,
And set his life to grim repentance's dirge.
Little he dreamed that gods had small concern
For poor profanities, but had him shriven,
When they his birth decreed; nor could they burn
A soul to ambushed falsehoods blindly driven.
That such high treason should the high gods please
Were but blasphemer's view of deities.

THE FANATIC

What an uncivil heart-consuming craze
Is that which, handcuffed to one isolate thought,
Bends Nature's largeness and man's various ways
To the gnarled flexure of one crabbed Ought!
And what a tortured demon-ridden wight
Is he—the victim of that dinning elf
That rides him through the vast complex of right
Forever beating that one drum himself!
His forehead stern, his wild and matted locks,
His frosty aspect blight the flowers of spring;
His iteration each new purpose blocks;
He lives in prison where never sweet birds sing.
Broad-minded Shakespeare were a better type,
Who humored all thoughts, seeking wisdom ripe.

OCCULTISM

Sphinxes are vain pretenders who conceal,
Enwrapped in riddles, some poor commonplace,
Which being guessed their shallowness reveal
But make no wiser who its knots unlace.
Truths esoteric or occult are weak,—
So weak that when the all-revealing light
Their emptiness exposes, they must sneak
Back into cover of the screening night.
But living truth shuns not the blazing day;
No beams too fierce, no scrutiny too keen
For its brave face; it shirks naught men can say
Secure in fact against tongue's bitterest spleen.
Light of the public square each statue tries,
Dispelling shadow shapes of mysteries.

THE QUESTION OF EVIL

A God omnipotent, omniscient, good,
Loves well His world! Yet under His decree
Is sin, crime, wretchedness! What blind mystery
Incredible! Because a good God would
Prevent such evil as a strong God could.
For God say Nature; then the problem's free
From empty questions as to what "should be,"
Since Nature's dumb, nor owns to any "should."
This course of Nature heedless and austere
Works out such potencies as ne'er could spring
From unavenging forces less severe
Of faultless virtue and no suffering;
Resisted storms to oaks their fibre lend
And conquered evil is man's staunchest friend.

THE BLACK VEIL

As troop the sooty crows across the sky
At nightfall winging home their dusky flight,
Nor utter note, nor turn to left or right,
But drive straight onward, hastening silently;
So dark-veiled vestals, that sweet love deny,
Wing their sad way from vespers' dirge of night,
With eyes cast down as fearing earthly blight,
To seek the cloister's wan monotony.
Poor victims of the curious creeds that hold,
God sends some here to live averse to mirth,
Delights to see them to men's pleasure cold,
And alien to the children-haunted hearth;
What treacherous God it were that made a world
And those that liked it to perdition hurled!

BLACK FRIARS

Why should Devotion drape her devotees
In raven garments of despondency,
Leaving bright colors to light souls that please
Their days with nature's frolic gayety?
Thinks she that God who in creation's song
Applauded all his works and called them good
Has since repented of bright hues as wrong
And chosen gloomy for the pious mood?
The Quaker gray, the nun's robe of dull black,
The monk's brown cowl, the preacher's mourning suit,
What comment put they on the faith, alack!
That so doth vestment every staunch recruit.
Were not the pagan cults with feast and dance
Nearer God's method of exuberance?

Supernatural

1200000000

THEOLOGY

As sits a parrot in her gilded cage,
Forever conning one mechanic note,
Nor ever wearies of her burden sage
Long since outworn by her unmeaning rote;
And as that bird forever feels secure
Upon its perch within a house of wire,
Nor longs to see the world beyond its mure
Lest it fall victim to some monster dire
So sits theology within its round
Of modern saws and affirmations old,
Disputing novelties beyond its bound
And screaming at discoveries as too bold.
But what poor gains had mortal men procured,
Had they the ancestral cages still endured.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

The ragged dervish whirling like one mad
In the lewd frenzy of extinguished thought
Feels sure to please some god with the poor fad
Of buying heavenly good for earthly; naught
Heeds his fool-fancy that he dupes with cheats
Poor present comfort, till he strips it bare;
Drugs fruitful enterprise with counterfeits;
And bustling work forsakes for drowsing prayer.
As the pert jackdaw decks his nest with glass,
Man chooses rubbish with disheart'ning zeal;
Though starved and frozen hies him to a mass,
And for his soul neglects his body's weal.
But to be warmed, well fed and housed on earth
Rears finer souls than piety mid dearth.

DEUS EX MACHINA

They who abound in worldly goods and health,
Having no strife with life, believe in God
As good, the gracious fountain of their wealth,
And to the suffering preach to kiss the rod.
But they whose fortunes sourly crost are care,
With toil, disease, and accidents perverse,
Believe in demon princes of the air,
And feel existence as that demon's curse.
As lakes reflect whatever on the spot
May stand—tree, castle, crag, a fence, or flowers—
So mirrors each man's deity the lot
Which he works out mid good or grievous hours.
The fortunate a glorious God adore,
While wretches galled a devil god implore.

THE FALSE GOD

Name for man's ignorance, yet more revered
Than his best knowledge which all harvests reaps,
To whom great fanes are built and altars reared
That man may grovel at them while he weeps!
How far hath science pushed thee from our globe,
Crowding thy spectres out through grove and glen,
From star to star still seeking thine abode,
And finding only phantom in each den.
Wherever knowledge drills its tunnels in,
Following the shining veins of golden truth,
It drives thy ghost before it pale and thin
Till thou 'rt left homeless unrevered forsooth.
Illustrious day! When slow mankind shall be
Released from thy fear by wise scrutiny!

WORSHIP

While listening to the organ's solemn sound,
And robed choirs chaunting like wind-rustled sea,
Who can but wish this soul-uplifting round
To fruitful uses might have been and be?
Whoe'er recalls its ageless industry
Must ask if aught has given less of gain
Than worship, which hath held man's soul in fee
And levied toll on all his hands have ta'en?
Are not the ships of faith now sinking low
On the horizon's marge, as bound nowhere?
Knows any one the port whereto they go?
Or trusts he costly cargo to their care?
Ages of faith still left a world forlorn,
Now days of action make an earth new-born.

SERMONS

Fervid orations scintillate and flow
From reverend pulpits down cathedral aisles,
Like molten lava streams down dark defiles,
Yet leave men empty as a dish of snow.
For knowledge makes no portion of their glow;
Heating devotion to a torrid zeal
They bar the mind to searching thought's appeal,
No fresh horizons showing the flock below.
Were half the eloquence but vented thus
To scatter germs of knowledge fresh and new,
That it might ripen to fruitage generous,
Men had perhaps waxed wise and sane and true.
The keys of heaven's kingdom knowledge guards;
And faith's pretences ne'er unlock its wards.

AUTHORITY

Who halters to old books his questioning thought
Elects to dwell with primal ignorance,
'Mid baseless guesses made ere knowledge brought
Its certainty to nature's random glance.
'T is wanton phantasy to make believe
Our rude forefathers held great in God fee,
And did from Him an express word receive
Better than any later age should see.
'T is charming folk-lore swarms the sacred page,
The buzzing fancies of grown children's brains,
Which but for ancients would ne'er engage
The manly reason with one moment's pains.
Their fairy tales for God-given gospels taken
Leave thought a prey to fond romance forsaken.

GOD AND NATURE

Why doth not God scourge blasphemy? Or more,
Reply to prayers to check a pestilence,
That still stalks on though supplications pour
Like rains in April? Is 't indifference?
And though men curse His all-untroubled name,
Profane His temples, or disown His Son,
He takes no vengeance, visits with no blame,
Nor harries sacrilege though often done.
Now Nature lets none slight her majesty
Without revenge taken quick as lightning flies;
Yet some fear God, who with live Nature play
As might a lamb with lions,—till he dies.
And when she slays with prompt severity,
They call on God with bitter useless cry.

A FLICKERING TORCH

If 't were but sure a god did supervise
The scheme of man's career and wisely steer
The lame endeavor of his anxious fear
Toward havens of divine felicities,
Were 't not for blundering souls a high emprise
To bear the brunt of all misfortunes drear,
Trusting the issues to that vision clear
Though ragged lightnings filled the stormy skies?
But far too flickering is this torch of faith
When held o'er empty cribs and homes of woe,
With ghastly light on tragedies it playeth,
Nor shows a recompense to those who sow
Bad seed to barren years, and reach the grave
In sobbing anguish fooled of all they crave.

MYSTERY

Within a cave a-smoke with fumes of fear,
Mephitic with rank superstition's breath,
Dwells mystery 'mid imps and dragons queer,
With satans, fiends, and goblins loaned by Death;
There too are glimmering flames of threatened hells,
The Sheols, Tophets, Tartarus kindled of old
To scorch the souls that feared no priest-born spells
In the dread dark beyond this earthly wold;
Its terrors daunted each barbarian wight
Whose blanched lips told his dreams for truth and scrawled
Children's rude figures on blackboards of fright
To which that tattooed savage trembling crawled;
Men shuddered more at formless ghosts of threat
Than at real horrors in their life-haunts met.

THE POPPY

The red rose speaks for love that soul elates,
The mignonette for faithfulness, 't is said;
Should poppy stand for faith's sweet opiates
That drug quick reason into drowsihead?
For faith steals through the aggressive intellect
With soothing balm that quiets thought like pain,
Dulls its keen edge, and doth its sight deflect
From novel truths that novel doubts unchain.
Doubtless large poppy-beds wide beauty spread
And faiths give color o'er great human fields,
A Christian blue, gray Buddhist, Moslem red,
Each to its own believers pleasure yields.
And what asks faith but sleepy indolence
And more of poppy to awakening sense.

THE COFFINED PRIEST

Cold, rigid, pale the tonsured priest doth lie
Within the narrow bed for all once made,
Nor plays there, golden, round his passive head
Any bright aureole of sanctity.
Scarcely less strait this casket I descry
Than the cramped cell wherein the living priest,
His mind immured, nor ever found the least
Fault with his quarters in that custody.
Perhaps his mind grows large in Paradise,
If there he went; one thing is plain,
That change from cell to coffin, though not nice,
Gives him no cause its straitness to arraign.
Who used but one close closet of broad earth
Might find a casket large, too large in girth.

EARLY GODS

"Dead are the old gods," cries the worshipper
Who kneels to new in cults elaborate;
But still old gods are gods compassionate,
Whose native glories to devotion spur;
The dazzling sun is man's great comforter;
The full-orbed moon he sees with heart elate;
Huge branching trees, and hearthstone fires propitiate
The universal heart; one might aver
These natural gods confer more pleasure
Than all the deities of human name,
Whose prophets promise blessings without measure,
Though little come of their unblushing claim.
But every day those woo our love again
That feed, caress and hearten living men.

MYTH AND SCIENCE

As when new morn breaks in auroral dawn
Through glimmering portals of far-arching sky,
And mounts till coping leagues of hill and lawn
One sea of rippling color glows on high,
So was the heaven of human thought at first
With gorgeous splendors of bright gods o'erspread,
Whose glories into divers names disperst
Dyed man's conceits to fables gold and red;
Morn's brilliant coloring fades as grows the day
To one wide sheet of all-revealing light,
So myths dissolve before white science's ray
In the clear splendor which unblindfolds sight;
But science leads to liberty and power
With all that beauteous gods had failed to shower.

FULIGINOSUS

Smoke of high altars, wreathing victims slain
To heedless gods, for ages had upcurled
Above poor human dwellings, all in vain,—
The gods untouched disdained the writhing world;
Smoke of tall factories whirling wheels of speed
Fumes now from chimneys where men forge and weave,
Whence human welfare due to human deed
Outpours 'mid smoke much misery to relieve.
So prayers dispatched to move the hand of heaven
As little win as did fat victims erst;
To him who doeth naught is nothing given,
But all to him who reckons deed the first.
Offerings and prayers sent by lean idleness
Are beggars lame and blind that swell distress.

THE HOLY COAT OF TREVES

What wondrous sight is this our times behold,
When myth and legend dry like dew away,
When doughty miracles lose their mystic sway,
That one frayed coat is prized above fine gold,
And worshipped as a cloth of power untold!
Yet no such trophies can it boast to-day
As steam and wire across the whale's path gray,
Or chemistry's new gifts to nations old.
But deep within ancestral halls of soul
Cowled mysteries kneel before some relic prized,
Or crooning, low-toned litanies uproll
Emotions that keep cowed thought hypnotized;
For fables with their wings of butterfly
Outcharm dun fact in garb of earthly dye.

MILAN CATHEDRAL

How like an anthem fraught with praise, toward heaven
In spotless marble white as angel's face
Above the plain where man is sharply driven,
The great cathedral lifts its sculptured grace!
The misty nave seems arching into sky,
The pillared aisles dim woodland avenues;
Great windows painted with the rainbow's dye
Show Mary and the babe in roseate hues;
To buy God's favor and reprieve from hell
This oratorio in stone was sung;
Each spire a note in that imploring swell
By human terror towards God's pardon flung;
Before its altars still men weep and pray
Intent with words Christ's pity to waylay.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

By love, prayer, worship, is God ever sought,
And reached in transports dewed with grateful tears,
Wherein emotion swallows up all fears
And feeling to an ecstasy is wrought.
But God to knowledge more reveals His thought,
Since knowledge widens its circles all the years,
While through enlarging forces still He nears
And to the student from all points is brought.
What feeling feels were somewhat; what mind knows
Is still the greater and to greater leads;
Since God's face through fresh knowledge ever grows
And ends in more than telling o'er monk's beads.
Who knows, knows God in truth, since knowledge is
Of God's works only in a universe all His.

THE WILL OF GOD

Nature is God's first will; that's sure; and yet
Rash, heady men, born yesterday, berate
This ancient nature, like a martinet,
And dub it sinful, shameless, reprobate;
Man's complex constitution they befoul
With reckless words, as were 't man-made; full sure
They can much better it; so scowl and howl
At who prefers sound nature's dateless lure;
So preach that one should bow to principles
That cross and vex his grain, and make accurst
His life; then when he swears, inveighs, rebels,
Call him the more a devil, bad as worst;
Now God's will, nature, will all earth-life bless,
But thwarted bring to maddened bitterness.

EXPANSIONS

When at the theatre of our troubled earth
I view the play of all-adventuring man,
Note his philosophies and cults, and scan
His ways fantastic, harsh, and mean, the dearth
Of wit and wisdom that sits by his hearth;
And that God humors all, withholding ban,
Permitting each to thrive as best he can,
I ponder if e'en badness hath not worth.
Oh thou! who claim'st thy views are measure sure
For all that should be in the rolling planet,
That thy but late-born wisdom makes secure
Thy bold decisions that get birth upon it,
Unbuckle the girdle of thy home-grown wit
And to all wandering thought throw open it!

Love



BELOVED

O Wife! most loved, still dear, whose life did creep
Into the shade of lonely death too soon,
Before thy feet had climbed the height of noon,
Or scaled the radiant crest of life's high steep!
How doth thy hand as 't were from heaven's blue deep
Uphold my footsteps with a constant boon
(As doth the shouldering seas the rolling moon);
So far love reaches from death's house of sleep.
Thy star receding shines with lessening beam
As through time's lengthening avenues I gaze,
Yet never fades from thought that distant gleam
Whence comes the peace and strength of lingering days.
Where'er the saints are is thy genial spirit,
Whose seats thy goodness must for aye inherit.

PAN AND ECHO

Pan and his lovely Echo were a pair,
'Twixt whom was never discord, though the twain
Were married when time started in his wain;
But Echo ever had considerate care
To go rehearsing Pan's words everywhere,
Attentive to his multiform refrain,
And often changing voice, or mad, or sane,
Still adding sweetness with responsive air.
How many wives had thought peace dearly bought
At cost of such attention to their lords,
And rather give the loudest cry to thought
Though household riot follow on their words!
Yet after ages of discoursing, who
Of wives hath such sweet voice as shy Echo?

VENUS VICTRIX

Most lustrous planet! Wanderer of the night,
Serene and steadfast shine thy beauteous rays,
Unmindful of the admiring deep amaze
Of those who worship toward thy careless light.
How far aloof from sympathy, thy bright
Untroubled radiance in the heavenly ways!
Remote from sorry earth whence men may gaze
To glorify their piteous human plight.
Bare are the skies when thou art hid from view,
Though all the feebler stars their great array
Spread o'er the hollow concave of the blue
To charm our sight, beguiling care away.
In vain! Since ever dazzled are their eyes
That once have seen thee in their heaven arise.

DISPARTED

Within the west the crescent moon hangs clear
With Venus pendant to her sickle keen,
As when but lately one large jewel's sheen
Decked the white crescent of my lady's ear,
But lovelier than the planet in her sphere.
Far is the star, nor near the moon I ween
Yet farther she with but one pace between
Where pallid love endures the pall and bier.
New moon and star part company erelong,
Withdraw their mated beauty from the eve;
Oft human fortunes suffer equal wrong
And lives are severed beyond time's reprieve,
Whose fates conjoined had burned with lustre bright
Upon the arch of life's recurrent night.

DEAR DESPAIR

Like Jove's large planet flashing in the sky,
Thou keepest that sole place which nature gave,
Nor stoopest down, whoe'er of men may rave,
To lend to one thy peerless brilliancy.
'T is better so, since thus thy splendor high
For all men shines, to no one made a slave;
Since in one love thy light might find a grave,
That shines a glory now to every eye.
How my sight reels beholding all thy state,
Attracted and repelled alternately!
Enchanted by that lofty mien elate
That gives no hint of mortal destiny!
Oft wretched in thy sight yet worsened far
When from thy presence lost I lose my star!

SOLATIUM

What were my refuge from foul fortune's spite
When flowers distil me poisons rank with ill,
When strange catastrophes my ripe hopes kill,
And threats of worse disasters me affright,—
What were in such an hour of rust and blight,
Save hemlock in life's brimming cup to spill,
And at one draught all miseries to fulfil,
Were 't not that death would blot thy face from sight?
For when I thee behold distresses fade,
I nor remember nor believe in woe,
Thy world of brightness brightens mine of shade,
And in thy glory my eclipses glow;
The sun that from a storm-cloud shows his face
Not more irradiates sea than thou my case.

BROODING

Dear Love! thy face before my troubled gaze
In air-drawn outlines like a spectre rises,
Or like a star veiled in obscuring haze,
Whose seldom beam the darkling sea surprises;
I call thy name in phrases manifold,
Still pleased, though but an echo faint replies,
To hear the gracious syllables retold
Within whose circuit all my heaven lies.
Thy absence makes the street a solitude
Though full of rustling feet that onward press,
And other friends seem but as strangers rude
Whose kindly words accent my loneliness.
Like the dear God thou fillest time and space
With hovering visions of thy dearer face.

WAKING AND SLEEPING

I know thee absent through my waking hours,
But sleeping dream thee present in full sooth;
To give sleep's vision all the joy of truth
There fails but speech denied of heavenly powers.
So near! So far! Yet still in slumber's bowers
Th' illusion hovers touched with tender ruth,
Bending on me its glance of glowing youth,
Which flies when fatal morn upon me lowers.
Yet would I not from thee in thought be free,
The mourning day is still a tomb of love,
And love hath joyance e'en in misery,
So high is loving all delights above.
Then haunt me still thou present, absent dear,
Till when returning thy loved self appear.

DON GIOVANNI

A score of times have I succumbed to love,
Inflamed by his strange fires that reason sear;
Each kindled me with flames that wise men fear
Yet cannot quench, howe'er they disapprove;
Each time sincere, from each I next did rove,
And whirled away to charmers made more dear
By fancy's shifting whimsies, waxed austere
Toward old attractions that with new ones strove.
But older now, love's ardor grows more frail;
I know that each fresh glamour soon may fade,
That beauty, grace, and spirit all may fail
To bind me firmly to the charming maid,
And yet the ancient, human fires will burn
And raptures kindle where new loves concern.

LOVE'S TREASON

As when a lion springs upon his prey
And with one stroke of talons lays him low,
While he a trembling victim scarce doth know
If yet he live or hath passed clean away,
So is the heart that love doth once betray,
Felled by the fury of his treacherous blow,
So paralyzed it scarce can longer trow
If still it keep the realms of sunlit day.
The beauteous world that once was joy intense,
Sunshine and song and hours but lately bliss,
Turn to a faded dream upon the sense
And all that thrilled but adds to wretchedness.
And like the kid beneath the leopard's paw,
Love cannot raise his head for love's foul flaw.

LOVING AND LIKING

With full-winged eagerness love hotly flies;
Hating the snail-slow pace of foot-sure thought,
To stoop upon his quarry; calling enemies
Whoe'er would make delay, resenting aught
That warns; so often finds himself caught fast
On thorns that prick him thick with tortures grim;
When married all his life is hourly cast
Against a nature nettle-like to him;
A liking starts as soon but slow of flight,
Floats like a circling hawk more leisurely
O'er its seen choice, nor doth alight
Till it hath searched all coverts, neath its eye;
And where love married oft is stung to hate
A married liking grows to lover's mate.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Who praise love's passion in its foaming course,
Impatient, headstrong, fiery, quick to blame,
But faintly know the all-surpassing force
Of wedded love and what its larger flame.
One like a meteor sends one ray through night;
A sun, the other gilds all days with joy;
No sorrow but will sparkle in its light,
No hour but summer in its dear employ.
One like a brooklet brawls and fumes along
Waking the echoes with its riotous flow;
The other, like a river deep and strong,
In silent waters drowns all ills below.
Who loves yet never weds but sips the brink
Of that rare wine well-wedded daily drink.

HER NEW LOVER

Yes, he is manly in his stalwart mold,
His face well turned, his neck a trifle bull,
His supple waist and hips well set and full,
His legs are strong like any athlete bold,
His glance is free, nor is his heart a-cold,
Plays well at ball and well an oar can pull,
And rides a horse as if to ride were null.
No better all-round man is there I 'm told.
Has money too, and keeps his yacht afloat,
Takes wind and weather like a Viking born,
Nor is he vain, nor on himself doth doat
Nor on less gifted creatures show his scorn.
And if a little wit he had 't would be
A last perfection—*vice* torpidity.

THOUGHT AND LOVE

Who deems that thought can love's warm place supply,
Or who that love for thought's defect atone,
Forgets his nature's twin complexity,
Nor heeds how light and fire both fill life's zone;
Yet love in love on thought's calm ways will rail,
Will stormily cry that all should yield to her;
And sturdy thought will quest his Holy Grail
With headstrong zeal though pleading love demur;
And each will rue his partial word at last;
Lovers will think, for love will thinkers pine;
Each have a surfeit of his nearest past,
And crave the other for its touch divine;
Though mad with love recall thought's starry skies,
Yet not forget 'mid thoughts love's ecstasies!

REPENTANCE

Dear heart! When strolling on the high-cliffed shore
That gracious afternoon mid-summer last,
Recalling fatal errors of the past,
The while the great sea sighed as grieving sore,
Seemed it as easy as for waves to roar,
That our weak falter should aside be cast
And place again be found at love's repast
For us who missed to that rare feast the door.
But only seemed! The past laughed scornfully
At our imploring cry to be reheard;
As touched with human pain in sympathy
Again the sea in pensive murmur stirred;
And breathed: "Who once lets love's door close shall greet
In outer darkness till slow death seem sweet."

A FACE

A sudden gleam of black Italian eyes,—
A diamond flash starts on my vagrant sight,
As lightning from a frowning cloud of night,
Stirring my soul with tumults of surprise;
A sweet young mouth whose lips the red blood plies
And paints a hue that kindles sense like fire,
Lashing the nerves with whips of keen desire,
Upon whose sting the voice of reason dies.
A brown, ripe cheek, a softly dimpled chin,
Small serried teeth, pearls of old ocean's caves,
And half-closed eyelids stealthy as hid sin,
With smiles like sea-foam breaking down dark waves,—
Such met me yesterday and with a glance
Took me its prisoner with swift insolence.

LOVE IN A HORSE-CAR

What twain are these, who in the crowded car
Find such delight within the golden day,
That furtive smiles about their red lips play,
As each towards each casts glances like a star?
Nothing that haps can their devotion mar,
Both wrapt in pleasure at what love doth say
Through words that other import should convey,
As that, "The day is bright!" "The distance far!"
They went to Wall street, not to see th' Exchange,
But still to see each other face to face,
And all the day wherever they might range,
'T was still one presence did each new scene grace.
Fresh from the country keeping honeymoon
They sip love's fulness, like two bees at noon.



Friendship



ELI KIRKE PRICE

Friend of the sages, and 'mid sages friend,
Whose living presence honored, loved, revered,
Did like a benison thy house attend,
How lapsing years thy memory have endeared!
Within thy city wert thou loudly praised,
Thy silver hair was to thy townsmen pride,
Thy calm words heard as wisdom's voice upraised,
And sought thy counsel just on every side.
Who shrewder was t' untwist law's tangled skein?
Who had more foresight for the city's weal?
Who of the newest learning was more fain?
Who less for human praises made appeal?
Thy sweet serenity and courtly grace
Must well become the heavens thy dwelling-place.

INCESSU PATUIT DEA

Within my time two women have I known,
Two daughters of the blessed gods supreme:
The one was dark and with night's stars did dream,
The other fair like young Aurora shone;
The first released my plaintive youth from moan,
The other did my cheerier age redeem;
But both so goodly, that one might esteem
Himself full-blest were either made his own.
Was it not fortune rare, twain to have found
In cloth of gold amid the ruck of frieze?
Two friends that on life's ocean outward bound
In hailing distance caught the selfsame breeze?
So, lonely have I never found the wave
Where all are sailing toward the lonely grave.

BEREAVEMENT

When the procession of lost friends I call
From glimmering halls of unrepentant death,
What shrouding griefs my mourning heart o'erpass
As I rehearse their charms while life gave breath!
Some rich in learning, some for genius choice;
Some prized for art, some for their bubbling mirth;
One for the rapture of her glorious voice,
For beauty some, some for their oft proved worth;
All, all for love; each leaves a memory sad,
A cureless loss whereat eyes dim with tears;
New faces throng their places young and glad,
Which also cheer in turn the lengthening years;
But never on the unheeding earth's wide plain
Shall those dear forms cross-bar the light again.

FRIENDS' FRIENDS

When in the rapture of divine surprise
One meets a friend's friend praised beyond compare,
And finds such praises were but worthless air
Matched with the charm of sweet realities;
Then thanks he all the gods, that Nature vies
With his half-budded hopes, and makes one fair
Richer in triumphs than his thoughts could dare,
And hails the future with contented eyes.
So when such fortune lately grasped my hand
All things most feared fell from my heart away;
The earth fresh gilded seemed a sunnier strand
For that new face that graced the later day.
Long as her love in his love shall repose
My friend enriched to me but dearer grows.

SIRENS

Sirens that sang by Caprea's misty coast
Till her brown beaches whitened with the bones
Of sea-drowned mariners mid sea-washed stones,
How many daughters have ye left to boast
Of equal havoc wrought amid the host
Of modern men, whose last breath spent in moans
Accuses your perfidious songs?—ye heartless ones
Who faintly smile unheeding every ghost!
Nor shall time fall that ye shall cease to sing,
Sing in sweet voices and admired refrains,
Sing while charmed victims their dear souls shall fling
At your white feet and die upon your strains;
And always on men's anguish will ye gaze
With subtle smile through which pleased wonder plays.

FROST

As when a frost locks fast the silver streams,
And sears the petals of belated flowers,
When birds give place to silent, songless hours,
Since in the south bright Titan sinks his beams,
So thy long absence as a frost-breath seems
That binds delights in winter's icy chains,
And blighted thought of ancient joy restrains,
While over all a flowerless winter dreams.
How changed the scene from those of earlier days,
When we twain held one common course and still
One common thought pursued, and in the rays
Of one condition walked for good or ill:
Should'st thou return, it were as summer came
With balmy freshness and his flowers, aflame.

A LOST FRIEND

Perplexity, distress, and sore dismay
Like warning Sybils, robed in sullen black,
Come forth to mock me on the wonted track
Where Love was singing erst his roundelay.
They thrust on me their bitter company,
Recalling blithesome hours that now I lack,
Since June to March her days hath beaten back,
Frosting her roses with a surly day.
Yet Love must always leave his flowers exposed
To chilling blight and treason's secret ill;
It were not Love that kept his garden closed,
And Brutus sometimes will his Cæsar kill.
Yet those black three still coming to my gate
Scourge me with misery too inveterate.

DESERTED

Like one who on a lonely sea alone,
Afar from land, far from befriending barks,
Drifts on a broken spar, nor ever marks
The sea-mew's cry, nor waves' incessant moan,
So spent is he with misery; no groan
Escapes his lips, since slow forgetfulness
Steals o'er his fading sense with dull distress;
But Death sits waiting for him as his own.
So losing thee I drift on time's wide wave,
Where neither sight nor sound concerns me more;
All rest of life I care not now to save,
As chilled with grief thy blindness I deplore.
Day follows day unchanged, while I abide
As one half-dead, and wholly stupefied.

FRIENDS IN NEED

Than friends earth breeds no choicer dear resource,
But only to the point where we need get
Assistance for sharp wants that us may fret;
Then friendship balks like a sleek, peevish horse,
And being pricked will kick with sullen force;
A friend whom carking cares like flies beset
Is easier borne than helped to pay a debt,
So seldom will he be relieved, of course.
Therefore should friendship lounge within the bars
Beyond which ravin the snarling beasts of need,
Nor let the wrangle of their hungry jars
Be heard amid its voices; for indeed
True friendship is a kid too delicate
To gambol far outside its garden gate.

DIES IRÆ

Beats angry fortune on my head her worst,
Chills dearest friendships, plucks good wealth away,
With pains stout heart and body doth dismay,
And throttling cherished plans makes days accurst;
Now knowledge fails to comfort,—once my first;
Love erewhile friendly finds her blue skies gray;
Hope hides in fear the splendor of his ray,
And wine, jest, song all fail,—so cheery erst;
Now what remains but death's release to sue,
That sponges clean the slate of cares at eve,
Erasing problems study failed to do,
And granting long recess from tasks that grieve?
Save that of earthly woes death is the sum
Whose full disaster strikes all others dumb!



Life



SOCIETY

A silken salon trimmed with lustres bright,
Where men and women their rare best display,
In costly garments tricked for charming sight,
That every sense may swim in gayety,
Shows sunny Nature from her nurse, old Care,
Slipt off to play like any child for glee,
And sip of love's elixir mid the flare
Of jewels, glittering eyes and laughter free.
'T is the high orgy of thrice-gilded life,
The flower-crowned feast of senses, feeling, thought,
Whence all is banned that wears the scowl of strife,
Where all is bidden of love and friendship wrought;
Even science, letters, fames are second here
Where only genial persons first appear.

CONVERSATION

Not more the songs of birds, nor varied more
Their plumes and stroke of flight across the sky,
Than conversations are, that evermore
Fly through the haunts of men a-low or high.
Some like the condor soar above the sight,
Some like the sea-mew dive beneath the deep,
More round man's daily business have their flight
And near life's common level fluttering keep.
But low or high, each whirs its human way
In love's delight or hatred's murky air;
Its stir diversifies the busy day,
And hurries progress on its course of care.
The lightest-winged may chirp the sweetest lay
And to the heart speak what hearts love to say.

WALT WHITMAN

I

I too, a man, sum up the ages past,
In blood, flesh, soul, one outcome of the stress
Of universal nature; I at last,
If small or large, if mean or grand, express
The general whole; for me have cycles rowed
Their skiffs across the darkling gulfs of time,
Like cheerful boatmen easy with their load;
For me the stars their circuit kept in rhyme;
For me did nebula cohere to orb,
And the slow strata build their mountain mass;
For me did protoplasmic force absorb
The mineral dust and grow to saurian crass.
In the first nothing slept I all secure,
Sure of my birthday as the stars were sure.

II

At last arrived I hail my manhood's play
Of flesh with force, of sense with beauty stung,
Of heart that bounds towards each new comrade flung
Across my path to love me or betray;
A harp Eolian where all winds foray
Not more responsive sings to every breeze,
Boreas or Zephyr, as the stray hours please,
Than sings my nature to each changeful day.
What clashing tumults in my fortune meet!
What pulses throb to love's divine caress!
What joyous muscle springs to motion fleet!
What eager brain doth eager thoughts possess!
Heart's love I give, and find in many souls,
Hands locked in hands we wend toward common goals.

YOUTH AND ELD

As May hath flowers and flush October fruit,
So youth hath love, and age his wisdom tried;
Yet age in wisdom takes a lesser pride
Than youth doth cherish for a ruffled suit.
Youth doth its brave appearance much repute,
Fresh skin, stout muscles, cheery heart beside,
While age contracts its scope and fortunes wide,
In shrivelled body shirking all dispute.
Youth's face is set toward summer's pompous prime,
And promise of unknown, autumnal grace;
While age toward barren winter speeds his time,
Feeling November on his blanching face.
So hand-full age to handsome youth gives way,
And youth the beggar hath the richer day.

SOLUS CUM SOLO

How pleasantly an uncompanioned time
One passes with himself! not heeding aught
Of what his neighbor thought, or sought, or wrought!
With sound views quickened as a soil with rime
One hears the world with his own wishes chime
Unjarred by any notes of discord rude,
That vanish banished from his solitude,
While all he cares for bides in golden prime.
Plenty reigns in that kingdom, and whate'er
He wills is done; his views are faultless truths,
Since no unreasonable fellow queer
Dares here appear against those views to cruise.
And like a spider scrambling down his thread,
He meets no hindrance; safe as one unwed.

SARATOGA

Cool Saratoga's many-fountained springs
By all-compounding nature brewed, call round
Unnumbered throngs whose dollars much abound,
With some who hold their compound healing brings.
Loudly within her ballroom fashion rings
Her golden bells, whose sweet seductive sound
May turn to bridal chimes, ere autumn crowned
With fruits shall spread her rainbow wings.
"An empty, vulgar pomp of wealth, where taste
And wisdom, virtue, love, have smallest part,"
Cry some, whose souls too superfine, and waste,
Flat purses comrades be in scorn's poor art;
But wealth makes pleasure, life, magnificence,
Which may for paltry scorn give recompense.

A LAWSUIT

The tedious court its fretful wrangle holds,
Where back and forth contention swings his brand,
And lawyers paid entangle truth's fine strand
As each at each in legal jargon scolds.
Justice in drowsy calm her eyes blindfolds,
And lets her scales hang idly in her hand;
Though eager clients still imploring stand,
She listens long nor yet the verdict molds.
Would that her clear wise word might sooner ring
Above the noise and falsehood of the suit,
That she might teach the judges lest they bring
Official follies from trained minds astute.
For judges oft with law made dull and blind
Give justice but lame spokesmen in their kind.

A CLIENT

In him thou may'st behold the wreck of such
A ship as lies a-pounding on the rocks,
Which cast off bravely from the harbor docks
And bravely sailed beneath a south wind's touch;
Anon a norther rose and blew so much,
Her tall masts fell, encumbered with their blocks,
Her bulwarks stove beneath old Ocean's shocks,
Her decks swept clean e'en to her cabin's hutch.
So stranded on a lawsuit's ruinous reef
Betwixt his enemy—the rock below—
And harpy counsel greedy as a thief,
His substance still from little to less doth grow.
And he has neither safety, strength, nor peace,
But beaten back and forth finds no surcease.

OLD AGE

All day the rain has blown beneath the cloud,
All day the mists have smothered in the bay,
All day have anchored yachts been drenched in spray,
All day has tempest whistled wet and loud;
The streets deserted mourn their 'customed crowd,
No children on the wind-swept beaches stray,
Nor o'er the waves do hovering sea-gulls play,
And the great mountains hide as in a shroud.
So on old age are storms of misery bent,
Dear friends are lost to surly death a prey,
Sharp pains twinge through the muscles stiff and spent,
And pleasure fades from outworn hearts away.
The senses scant their bloom, the soul its fire,
And day dogs day replete with stale desire.

BEAUTY AND TIME

Sweet Beauty gazed on Time till his old veins
Swelled with the rapture prone to blooming youth,
Kindling such wanton ardors that his reins
Forgot their ancientry and wisdom's ruth;
Then clasping Beauty to his wrinkled breast
He wrought upon her all the world's desire,
Deaf to her outcries in his arms caressed,
Nor cared that her bloom faded in his fire.
When Beauty weeping saw her dreadful plight
She sat her down dishevelled, desolate,
Bewailing her misfortunes day and night,
And praying Jove such crime to castigate.
Jove laughed, foreseeing what would be her pride
When Time's sweet children played at her sweet side.

CLASSIC UNIVERSITIES

Homes of traditions delicate of limb, .
Where guileless lore walks large in cap and gown,
And ancient ghosts stalk forth to show their dim,
Faint wisdom to the modern, busy town,
How long will solemn Dons prefer old books
To fresh-cheeked knowledge strengthening every day,
And take gray cobwebs in oak-raftered nooks
For work of Pallas' spider hid away?
Is it not time to leave Minerva's owls
For unstuffed birds that fly by day and sing
Concerning living issues, and brave souls
Since Agamemnon born and flourishing?
O cloistered halls! with blood-full youth ye deal,
Who fool with games, bored with your dull ideal!

Animals



THE SPEECHLESS

Dumb animals are Nature's failures met
In her long quest for man; they struck false leads,
Laying the strain of that contention set
Upon all flesh to meet existence's needs,
On tooth, or claw, or wing, or giant force,
On fin, horn, beak, mail-coat, or scent of nose;
Each staked his chance on his preferred resource
Nor could reach higher than the tool he chose.
So grovel they, bound to a narrow line,
Forever prisoners in a cage of thews;
Their small desires and clumsy needs combine
To keep them beastly in self-fashioned mews;
But nimbler simians taking to the trees
Made feet to hands, then tools and brains by these.

FELIS LEO

Tawny old Leo lies at length, scarce sees
The throngs that stare upon his brindled face
Awe-struck with legends of his fearful race;
He yawns, and opening out his bended knees
Sits on his supple haunches, ill at ease;
Then rising languidly begins to pace
His cage with noiseless feet and feline grace,
Or mouths his mate with gruesome teeth, that please!
Dreams he perchance behind that forehead fierce
Of the free desert where he sometime prowled,
Hunting the roebuck, daring spears to pierce,
Or crunching rivals while his mistress howled.
But see! A sudden uproar him arouses;
And king of beasts in majesty he poses.

THE LAST BUFFALO

What a forlorn and time-discouraged brute
Stands yonder cowering in the sleety rain,
Whose drooping head and bramble-ragged mane
Mark evil days and time's injurious suit!
Can naught the glowering eyes of fight recruit?
Nothing restore the black-browed strength again,
When his forefathers tossed with fierce disdain
Their shaggy fronts, and charged in hot pursuit
Their redskin foes, till steed, man, buffalo,
In one tumultuous *melée* mingled, sped
Across the echoing plain, as torrents flow,
While the gray dust flew heavenward from their tread
And all fought 'gainst swift-riding death? Ah, no!
Coralled in parks their warrior rage lies low.

ROVER

One melting July afternoon serene,
Came a small toddler down the empty street,
Scarce four years old, whose weak uncertain feet
Went wandering onward by his friends unseen;
Our dozing Rover, stirred by dog-thoughts keen,
Through half-closed eyelids saw the baby sweet,
And rising gravely, in the blinding heat
Gave her his escort down the village green.
And when she turned aside and curled her down
Within a dry ditch overhung with weed,
He lay beside her, one paw on her gown,
To guard her slumbers; giving patient heed
Till twilight fell; and then with barking wild
Made echo till men came to take the child.

THE RED SQUIRREL

Fleet-footed racer of the forest way,
Asking no road-bed for thy scampering speed
Long as rail-fence, stone-wall, or dead branch gray
Serve for thy twinkling feet's impatient need!
What saucier form than thine arrests the sun?
What prettier footstep rustles autumn leaves?
What lovelier plume is waved by any one?
What defter nutsman on the hickory thieves?
Busy art thou as one of human kind
To get thy store of nuts and grains secure,
Against when Winter pacing his white round
Locks nature's larder-lid with hoar-frost sure.
Then holdest thou within the rocking tree,
As men at Yule-time, flush festivity!

A SNAP SHOT

A cooing babe in idle innocence
On all-fours creeping, as an infant will,
About a settler's log hut near a rill,
Espied a rattler coiled beside the fence;
Having of serpents no experience
The infant towards him crept as charmed, until
The old snake fearing some insidious ill
Rattled the signal of his dread intents.
Spell-bound the distant father saw, as shot
The fanged jaws forth the laughing babe to slay—
When sharp a firearm's crack rang o'er the spot,
That blew the hideous head a rod away.
Swooned on her smoking rifle at her door
Lay the child's mother, marksman of that score.



Birds



THE ROBIN

The robin hopping nimbly o'er the lawn,
With head erect and friendly eye alert,
Looks, in his waistcoat red, as trim and pert
As life one picnic were from early dawn,
And care did never make him woe-begone.
But see, he stoops to tug a worm from earth,
Then cuts it small to feed the unending dearth
Of greedy young whose mouths like wide graves yawn.
So flies he back and forth the livelong day,
From dawn to latest twilight drudging sore,
To keep his fledglings from perdition's way
And raise a family with naught in store.
What though he sing! he must his living win;
Like man he toils, although he need not spin.

BOB WHITE

Across yon wheat-field near the bosky swale
Cry two reiterate notes—"Bob White! Bob White!"
Betraying the modest lurking of the quail
In whose striped body sportsmen much delight;
Ancestral wits have brought him but to this
Poor, slender speech for his vocabulary,
Where to fast shackled he must ever miss
Knowledge of great transactions sublunary.
His timid brood thus chirp and fall a prey
To human treacheries of springe or gun;
That cruelly those pretty chicks betray
And hush their music ere 't is well begun;
Yet served on toast they to the higher rise,
Becoming man in that last sacrifice.

THE BLUE JAY

Now frosty Autumn lays its shaking hand
On every woodland, summer poms to doom,
And lights the broad-leaved hickory as a brand
Of yellow flame to cheer October gloom.
Amid those hurtless fires, the blue jays flit
On restless wing, with voice of strident tone,
Foraging the great trees through without permit,
Chaffing the squirrels, hunting wood-worms down.
A rattling life our jay pursues, I wis,
Intrusive, insolent, and gay with pride;
The pleasure of the powerful is his,
Whose strong beak like a spear doth foes deride.
Hussar in blue mid gold and scarlet leaves,
His soldier arrogance the small birds grieves.

THE SPARROW'S NEST

In grand Corinthian capitals of pride,
On city streets the sparrow, nothing caring,
Lodges his nest of straws and string allied
For his wee offspring's safety and well-faring.
So lives he in a palace housed in state,
Not having carved a stone or laid a story,
And safely perched on high above the gate
Looks down on lords and princes in their glory.
So little folks if careless, sturdy, merry,
May mix with great and all their splendor share,
Since nothing is required beyond the worry
To put one in the swim and keep him there;
The sparrow chirps as well from eaves of stable;
But men-folk better 'mid friends rich and able.

THE SPARROW'S COURTSHIP

A slim, brisk maiden trimmed in Quaker gray,
Last year a fledgling, now to trim quill grown,
Attracts the young beaux sparrows living alone,
Who ask her grace to set a marriage day.
Amid their chirping flocks in wanton play,
Such noisy bickering she doth provoke,
Stirring love's ardors in those little folk,
As kindles wrath and many a bitter fray.
Incessantly her lovers woo, while she
Now one, now all with angry beak repels;
As were each lover but an enemy,
Whose ruffled plumage meant not wedding bells.
None know what ends the courtship and the strife;
But always soon the maid becomes a wife.

BOBOLINK

Brisk minstrel of the swamps that wak'st the May,
How bravely dost thou ruffle in fine feathers,
Facing tart elements and changeful weathers
In yellow velvet and black satin gay.
Thou art the brilliant tenor in Nature's play,
Lover and cavalier of fens or heathers
Whom household drudgery to thy nestlings tethers
Without dispiriting, the livelong day.
No English lark hath more blithe flow of song,
More rippling thrills, more gurgling gush of notes,
When from a bending weed or flying along
The listening air, thy bubbling warble floats.
Thou hast no teacher, yet stage tenors might
In rivalry with thee be dumb for fright.

WILD PIGEONS

Of old, wild pigeons streamed in flocks so vast
They hid the sun beneath a twilight gray,
And soft low thunders as they swiftly passed
Shed from their wings along the airy way.
Red Indians sparse took but a scanty toll
From those innumerable broods that broke
The forest branches at their nightly goal;
So grew they swiftly to a countless folk.
White settlers came to farm and multiply;
To fill the echoing land with thrift and gain;
Their children slew the wood-dove's progeny
And hushed their cooing o'er the grain-rich plain,
Till scarce a lonely swift-winged passenger
Doth o'er wide prairie or deep forest fare.

THE TURKEY

Original American! whose swelling port
And arrogant voice proclaim self-conscious worth,
Thine ample merit opens hall and court
The wide world round, despite thy barnyard birth,
To thee as king of feasts! When winter sere
Calls men to wassail in the festive throng,
Thou banishest the sense of nature's wrong.
The new world's gift to old lands far and near.
Far fitter than the ravening eagle thou
To be our nation's symbol, since thou art
A type of affluent plenty's overflow,
Lighting man's eyes with health, with glee his heart.
Not ours to prey like eagle, lion, bear,
But scatter frolic bounty everywhere.

MIGRATIONS

Aloft the wild geese fly in arrowy line,
Fly swift and straight without an instant's thought,
Fly silently, or honking loudly sign
Each unto each the way to summer sought;
Anon alighting near some silver lake
They post them sentinels with eyes alert
To guard their feeding phalanxes; awake,
As are word-linking men, to hints of hurt.
Whence learned they their fine subtleties—to know
Old Titan's course in heaven, and steer untaught
Without a compass, or by night to go
Through pathless air? Find they the pole-star clear?
Or in all creatures doth brisk reason reach,
As with ourselves, to each one's needs in each?

SEPTEMBER

Fair-feathered and fair-weather friends of song
Now form in flocks for fitting southwardly,
And bickering loudly with discordant cry
Rustle the trees whereto they swiftly throng.
What noisy parliaments to them belong!
What lively caucuses beneath the sky!
As were all making ready carefully,
Lest any fail of warning with their young.
Have they the worry, trouble, and expense
That heat domestic waters to a boil
When human kind do change a residence?
Ah, no! They have no baggage with its moil;
And though their journey 's long through windy air
His own frail wings waft each small passenger.

EAGLE AND LIGHTNING

Circling beneath the clouds in lonely pride
The bird of Jove serenely swept the sky,
On strokeless pinions balancing so high
The mountains shrank to wrinkles; then he cried:
"Who hath such wing the black storm-rack to ride?
Who kings it o'er his cognate tribes as I?
What barriers can check my wind-free liberty?
What shaft or bullet cleave my orbit wide?
Man's petty tribes me on their crests portray,
And to my swoop their hardiest deeds compare;
And e'en great Jove whom gods and men obey
Gives to my talons his fire-bolts to bear"—
Jove flashed one dart of lightning through the sky,
Jove's bird dropt headlong, weaker than a fly.

THE FIREFLY

Thy mimic lantern flashes through the night
Like Juliet's window to direct thy mate,
Whom ancient habitude keeps up so late
That he must lie abed while sun shines bright.
But since thy body must provide a light,
Thou only of all creatures up to date
Hast sprung some cunning method to create
Light that not burns, but still will glow aright.
Secret worth knowing! Could one importune
It from thee! But thou knowest not how, or why
Thy myriads in the dew-impearlèd June
Can flare and twinkle like new stars in sky,
Yet kindle nothing; nature only knows
What precious alchemies thy light compose.

Flowers



THE RED PEONY

Reduplicate flower whose ruby wealth of dye
Hath drunk its liquid splendor from the rim
Of blushing wine-cups mantling to the brim
With blood of purpled grapes! What bloom can vie
With thine in its imperial potency?
The queenly rose before thee waxes dim,
Since thou art as an eastern garden hymn
To sunrise sung—earth's rapturous morning cry.
The childlike Japanese, whose almond eyes
Adore thy flowering in the hardy spring,
Release their children from school industries
That they may drink thy lust of coloring.
But Western people with Philistine sight
Neglect thy glories, as ground moles the light.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Flower most resplendent, much beloved of those
Who, in the poor and hunger-bitten East
With small delights, are fain to gild their least,—
No flower of any field so variant blows,
From buttons scarcely larger than the nose
Of the wood squirrel, to the mænad feast
Of hairy blossoms riotously creased,
And tangled into heaps that pain the rose.
Thine errant tribes may type the human race
That fluctuates easily through various freaks
From cannibal to gentleman, with face
Of demon, angel, beast, that each bespeaks.
Thy sports are curious, lovely, grandiose,
But man's, from thug to Newton, outvie those.



Nature



THE HUDSON

With tranquil majesty our river flows
From lordly Adirondack Mountains green,
Where muskrats slink and otter fish unseen
And antlered stags wait for their lonely does.
How swell its waters as it grandly goes
By cloudy Catskill through West Point's ravine,
Floating rich fleets its sculptured banks between,
Toward pillared Palisades past Anthony's Nose!
Next laps Manhattan's wharves in light caress,
Blent with green Neptune's earth-surrounding streams
And dancing by the city's blithesomeness,
Gives port to navies where the high gull screams;
Then sinks its being in the featureless sea,
As souls melt theirs in death's infinity.

MANHATTAN BAY

Let Naples boast her turquoise-gleaming bay
Where towered Capri frets the sapphire skies
And old Vesuvius stokes his furnaces:
Manhattan's busier waters greet the day
More blithely glorious to the sea-gods' play,
Amid her isles surcrowned with palaces,
Spanned by the bridge that with an elf-work vies,
Gatewayed by "Narrows," 'gainst a foe's foray.
Lo! snowy sails that drive where'er winds blow!
Lo! swift-wheeled ferries furrowing deep the foam!
Lo! steamers huge like dark sea-kings that go!
Lo! graceful yachts, dear pleasure's vagrant home!
And see! Fond Liberty her goddess sends
To lighten hither all the world—our friends!

NEWPORT

Old ocean thrashing his colossal waves
Against the rock-ribbed outposts of the shore
Rages no-whither with more deafening roar
Than bellows through famed Newport's ragged caves.
Dim centuries slink to cover while he raves
Round cape and cornered cliff, and evermore
Bursts in some weakened postern with his hoar
Unweariable surge that spares nor saves.
So 'mid our human sea incessantly
The present dashes on the buttressed past
As were foundations gray an enemy
Fit but to fall to thought the iconoclast;
Each age its angry, battering surges flings .
Upon staunch customs grown to hinderings.

MOUNT DESERT—1891

This island lay as radiant in the sun,
Mid bays as lovely, climbing peaks as high,
With beaches fit to hear a lover sigh,
In the dim days of fourteen ninety-one.
But round these rocky capes did red men run,
Stacking their wigwams 'neath the fish-hawk's eye,
Trapping the broad-horned moose, and beaver sly,
Themselves but prowlers like the game they won.
Changed is the race and with it changed the whole!
The settler routed Indians from their lair,
To plant a palace on each rock-ribbed knoll,
Build wharves, roads, towns—whatever makes earth fair;
And where one savage paddled his frail canoe,
A mighty war-fleet breaks the sea-way blue.

WATER

The fluid surge beats flinty cliffs to shards;
Shatters great steamers stranded on the rocks;
And as with Thor's all-fracturing hammer knocks
Sea-walls to fragments like a house of cards;
This selfsame surge drawn high in mist sunwards
Floats lighter than a thistle's feathery locks,
Drifts through the unharmed groves in broken flocks,
Or strokes the strengthless grasses on the sward;
Exhaled to steam and trammelled close in steel
With vaporous hand it drives huge enginery,
Thrusts through the conquered wave the well-forged keel
And doth its parent surge with ease defy;
So well hath Nature through each drop disperst
Her strength and weakness, each by turns the first.

AT SEA

I call thy name, O sea, to tell thee how
I hate thy wave! Thou art a potter's field
Of ever-ready graves; nor friend nor lover wield
O'er thee the lightest power; no sailor's vow
Moves thee to spare his storm-beleaguered prow;
Thy glorious, glittering face, thou treacherous knave,
Is but a silver mask well wrought and brave
To hide a ruffian 'neath a courtier's brow.
What other armies since great Pharaoh's host
Hast thou engulfed and strangled with false moan?
What mariners burked? What cities on thy coasts?
Pale landmen on thy rocking billows groan;
Who lives upon thee, through thee, by thee, still
Is helpless victim of thy murderous will.

SEA-WAVES

As hour by hour the bickering waves repeat
Their endless movement, nothing to attain,
Nor check the music of their deep refrain
Though each falls dying at his fellow's feet—
So 'mid our human seas' incessant beat
Rise men as baby ripples on the main;
Ten thousand dip to swell some others' gain,
Their weak force spent within a narrow mete.
Those others growing like a vast sea-crest
Whose gloomy bulk o'ertowers the steadfast land,
Some Bismarck or Napoleon, give unrest
To empires trembling at their bold command.
Yet all alike sink at the last, and merge
Their haughty being in the general surge.

CALM AND TEMPEST

Sleeps the white moonlight on the dimpled sea,
Paving a silver highway o'er the waves
As for a god's procession: Neptune's caves
Sob with no liquid clamors, since e'en he
Nods on his idle trident, while his free
Tumultuous monsters cease their play; scarce laves
One surge the ship's black sides; rough Boreas raves
Within barred gates confined. How changed shall be
The halcyon scene when Eolus unreins
His racing winds and shouts them forth across
The breakers wild, blowing the streaming manes
Back from their high-arched necks, with threats of loss
To groaning merchantmen, whose chill sailors reef
Their straining sails foreboding wreckful grief!

NIAGARA

In continental floods that roar and leap
Niagara's waters down her rapids fly,
Where white-maned breakers rearing far and nigh
Like battling squadrons to the cataract sweep.
Perpetual thunders boom athwart the deep,
Perpetual vapors smoke athwart the sky,
Perpetual rainbows o'er the thick mist ply,
Perpetual shudders through the large earth creep.
Who that beholds the plunge of emerald floods
Down the huge horseshoe of the trembling fall
But stands amazed as at a game of gods
Whose viewless hands loose elements from thrall?
What countless ages heard these echoes roar
Ere man was, and may hear when man's no more!

THE GREAT LAKES

A silver chain in links of silver seas
Cast carelessly across a continent,
Whose folded lengths to many a loop are bent
With sail and steamer pictured—such are these;
Like oceans toss their billows to the breeze,
Both bond and barrier 'twixt nations twain;
Dividing land from land with leagues of main,
Uniting both with commerce' hands of ease;
These friendly waters float no hostile fleets,
No fortified headlands frown with parapets;
But bustling cities find their beaches meet
For palaces unguarded, free from threats;
And when their rivers down Niagara pour
Their thunders please with mock of cannons' roar.

A TROUT BROOK

'Neath leafy coverts of the bosky glen
Trips the slim brook o'er ledges great and small
Laughing in foam down many a tangled fall,
And singing over shallows merrily, when
Some pelting shower swells its thin stream; and then
The speckled beauty of the trout outleaps
From the swift, rushing current where he keeps
To snatch the giddy moth above his den;
Comes the sly sportsman with seductive hook
And masquerading fly to featly lure
That greedy gourmand from his chosen nook
Beneath the alders where he lurks obscure;
If fly, fish, man be victim still thou flowest,
And still dost trip, laugh, sing where'er thou goest.

THE MISSISSIPPI

Father of waters, Mississippi! Hail,
Most lordly river! Thy imperial stream
Hath silted back old Ocean to his pale
And built a continent where nymphs did dream.
Thick-shouldered buffalo once swarmed to drink
Thy large perpetual flood; wild horses drave
In prancing herds along thy grassy brink,
And amorous elk o'erswam thy tawny wave;
Awe-stricken red men prayed thy deity.
The Saxon came to show thee but a thing,
With bridges spanned, with wheels defied thy play,
And with strong dykes coerced thy wandering;
But when thou swell'st to inundation's rage
How dost thou waste man's painful seigniorage!

THE NEW ENGLAND ELM

Behold yon elm, with mighty girth of bole
That singly lifts a forest into air,
Each bough—a tree—doth countless branchlets bear,
Which all one grove of foliage skyward roll!
But see! Now giant winds assault the whole,
And clutching at its branches fiercely tear
The green luxuriance of its dryad hair,
Wringing its groaning limbs in wild control.
An hundred years have swollen that trunk of might,
Another hundred wait to crown its pride,
While flitting legions of frail men in flight
Through life's small plaisance in its shade confide.
No wonder they of old held worship high
Awed of great trees and did them deify.

NATURE'S FESTIVALS

The circling seasons tread a festive round,
Which spring leads forth enwreathed in early flowers
That troop to field and brookside when the showers
Of dripping April drench the spongy ground;
A feast of leaves when summer pomps abound
And woodlands fly their rustling banners; then
Shy Pan peeps out from his sequestered den,
And dryads flit through copses foliage-crowned;
A feast of fruits when autumn iris-hued
Brings in the foison of the copious year
To heap the creaking wain, and Bacchus lewd
Drains from empurpled grapes his frenzied cheer;
A feast of winds when winter tempests howl
And hood brown earth in a white-friars' cowl.

AUTUMN

Behold the sunset hath his flushed scarves flung
Upon the woodlands for a raiment bright
To greet the coming of young Winter white,
Whose herald Boreas hath his nearing sung.
Sweet Autumn, shrinking like a captive wrung
From war, clings to his neck with blandishments,
Pervading all the air with faint rich scents
To soothe his soul her ripening fruits among.
Young Winter charmed forgoes his blustering noise,
And lies at Autumn's feet in peacefulness,
Wooed by her rustling leaves, her drowsy voice,
And spells of gorgeous color in her dress.
Her soft caresses his wild heart beguile
To hold his frost-hounds in the leash awhile.

INDIAN SUMMER

November turns upon his heel and waits,
The cold winds in his hutches kept in thrall,
While dying Summer sounds a flute-like call
To summon back her days beyond their dates.
A slumberous languor folds the hills and brakes;
The cock-crow sleepy through wide air doth fall;
Through russet woods faint lazy breezes crawl
And nature broods as one that hardly wakes.
Rare is a day in June, but rarer this,
Sent when October's death hath grieved the year,
That woos the tranquil earth with such a kiss
As white-haired lover gives his old love dear.
The world of men basks in the borrowed day
All wondering what hath given the white Czar stay.

THE BIRTH OF A CYCLONE

The noon was heavy, hot, and still; no air
Fanned the close chambers of aërial space;
No leaf wagged on his spray in mid-day glare;
When from a bough—his lazy sun-screened place—
A hawk upflew to seize an insect small,
Then quick resumed his perch. His instant stroke
Beat with light wing the stagnate heavens' wide hall,
And rustled pendant leaves; their fluttering broke
Into a gathering breeze that spun and whirled
Till with a moaning roar and riot of death
A far-flung cyclone reeled along the world,
With towns and forests writhing in its breath.
What hawk's wing started on the prairie wide
Grew to God's terror 'mid men horrified.

THE SOUTH YARD

To sit within a honeysuckled porch and gaze
Across an emerald lawn 'neath bowery elms,
When shimmering heats enwrap the drowsy days
And crickets drone across the airy realms;
To hear slow zephyrs rustle through the trees,
And watch the cumulus go down the sky,
While all around breathes summer's languorous ease,
Revives one's heart to childhood's vacancy.
What though loud vespers in the neighboring fane
Man's follies to the unheeding gods rehearse?
Great, liberal nature chaunts her wise refrain
In gentler tones that soothe the universe;
Her viewless fairies fill the dreamy air
With balms that banish all the gnomes of care.

A HOT WAVE

O God! Thy weather is intolerable!
Sits there no mercy in wind-driven clouds?
Thou seest thy heat enwrap in stifling shrouds
The pretty children; and of woe how full
To failing eld thy parched sirocco blows!
The blameless horses stagger through the streets
Panting and conquered in thy blighting heats;
What can thy heart to such extremes dispose?
Murders and suicides and desperate deeds
Thy sun doth generate like worms in flesh;
Such crazy moods thy torrid Titan breeds
When one cool breeze would from such sin refresh.
Who praise God for choice mercies, might they not
Blame him for horrors of his heat begot?

NEW YEAR AT BOMBAY

Rude January doffs his robes of fur,
His fleecy beard and ermine wraps of snow;
Sends north his team of reinless gales to blow,
And with mild zephyrs to Bombay doth spur,
Where he meets May and takes the hand of her;
Odorous with subtle perfumes strong and sweet,
Beneath tall palm trees walks he light of feet
Smoking his pipe with Oriental myrrh.
So New Year enters as the youngling should,
To beauteous welcomes of a balmy time,
Crowned with fresh flowers in blooming multitude
Instead of flowerless wreaths of hoary rime.
But frosty greeting give Auroral Lights
Mid frigid wastes and sparkling polar nights.

THE HEAVENS

The sky, a trembling vast of space unknown,
Presents a barrier to the baffled eye,
Whose far-receding depths with stars are sown,
Whose least existence were eternity.
Beneath the heavenly dome we mortals go
As 'neath the roof-tree of our native home,
Nor count it strange, when wandering to and fro,
It still goes with us, bending where we roam.
Across its hollow arch bright planets swim,
And the large moon place for its circle finds;
The larger sun has but an islet's rim
Within wide ethers which no limit binds.
As one lone swimmer midst of shoreless seas
Swims our lone being its immensities.

TO-DAY

A deathless lion stalking o'er the sand
Of bleaching deserts, with his trailing tail
Erasing every footprint as he wends, might stand
Amid those trackless wastes a symbol pale
Of that still living present, which between
The dead past and the unknown future's vast
Walks tireless onward,—sole creature ever seen
Amid those endless phantom leagues out-cast.
For us humanity fills out this hour
With weighty interests to our fortunes wed,
But countless eons were ere man did flower,
And countless shall be when his term is sped;
The desert is time's wide eternity,
Th' immortal lion ever young To-day.

FINIS

Some million years shall see the radiant sun,
Through which we live and have our being all,
So cold in heaven that icy chill shall fall
On earth and planets that about him run;
Then shall our wonder-working race be done;
Its noble industries upon this ball,
Its loves, arts, governments, whate'er we call
Most glorious, like a splendid dream be gone;
O mystery of being! That we men
Should range all worlds for truth and strength and good
Only to find in all at last a den
Of desert chaos, lifeless solitude:
What heart but aches with heavy pain to think
His home, his race, his earth to naught shall shrink?

OLD COMRADES

O sonnets dear! How many sorrows lie
Embosomed 'mid the orchards of your song!
How many a smarting moment hurt by wrong
Hath soothed its anguish in your cadenced cry!
How many a cheery hour has scurried by,
Its moments racing in swift-footed throng,
When, hunting rhymes that to your lines belong,
Vain time forgot his tedium and low sigh.
Now I, whom you so oft have comforted,
Thus bid you forth unto the busy crowd,
To try your fortune with all phrases said
And mostly silenced 'mid earth's echoes loud.
Such voyage safe I wish you on time's wave
As hath frail nautilus where billows rave.

Of Various Feather



BEAUTY

The oriole like a firebrand flies
Through the green boughs of leafy June,
Unheedful of the brilliant dyes
That make his presence such a boon.

So beauty all unconscious lies
In loveliness about the earth;
Sunsets not heed their brilliant skies,
Nor diamonds know their sparkling worth.

Beauty but comes when man is born
Who chooses this and that with care;
Gives to one pebble naught but scorn.
Another priceless leaves his heir;

The oriole with glad eye pursues,
The sparrow like a pariah shuns;
Would feathered jewels have in crews,
Would brown birds slaughter with his guns.

THE BACHELOR'S LAST DINNER

A gallant youth strode down the street;
Bright were his eyes and swift his feet,
And gayly to himself he said:
"It shall be long ere I am wed.

"The girls are sweet, the girls are fair,
And give me welcome everywhere,
But many a day shall flit away
Ere I be chained with one to stay."

The youth was bold and full of glee;
He loved the land, but more the sea;
He thought for years to hoist his sail
And fly from wedlock on the gale.

But in the violets on his breast
Snugly ensconced chanced Love to rest,
Who heard with roguish fun his boast,
Sure prelude to a game soon lost.

And then the fate he most did scorn
Love sent to meet this youth one morn
Upon the sea in dim disguise
Demurely hid in hazel eyes

Which snared him like a bird. In vain
He strove against Love's fatal bane,
For his stout challenge Love resented
And him with thrilling pangs prevented.

At last he yielded to Love's charm,
For who can Love's small hands disarm?
At Love's feet, bound with violet flowers,
This bold youth spent his fleeting hours.

And when the victress took him hence,
A trophy to Love's consequence,
He could not flee across the sea
Unless in her dear company.

And this late scornful bachelor
Bids us, his friends, a feast to share,
To celebrate his coming state
And flight from men still celibate.

To whom anon this word he sends:
"You know not what you miss, dear friends;
Love's sweetness, charm, and tenderness
Is what no words can all express.

"I, prisoner here of Love's rich grace,
Bid one and all to seek Love's face,
And bending gladly at his throne
To crave from him just such an one

"As to my hand has fallen so late—
A laughing, winsome, beauteous mate
Whose single, coy and sweet caress
Makes freedom seem but lonesomeness."

So on these bachelors I call
To give these lovers loved of all
A "Long live bride and bridegroom gay,"
And flower-strewn be their earthly way.

Till they in heaven are safely housed
Be they at front of life's carouse,
Their voyage rare all pleasures yield
Till them receives the Elysian field.

A REBEL SLAVE

I was Love's master, he my slave;
I gaily drove him here and yon,
Used whip and spur upon the knave,
And with sharp words kept him undone.

And he, the craven, gave me grace,
And like a serf to service born
Bent his proud head before my face,
And cowered beneath my lightest scorn.

He brought me friends, he brought me hearts,
He filled my hands with gifts of price;
Fair words he brought me from his marts
And with soft promise did entice.

So served me well for years, and feared
Not to fulfil my faintest whim,
A servant tried and prized appeared,
Who sang me still his grateful hymn.

Till when one day he saw and seized
The heavenly rapture of thy smile,
Then with it turned to me and teased
His lifelong master with strange guile.

Next, in a trice thy graces stole,
And trimmed him with their loveliness;
Put on thy matchless charms of soul,
And stood as in new armor dressed.

Then loosed his splendors all abroad,
Filled the large air with flame and fear,
And in such harness panoplied
Drove at me with his sword and spear.

First me of reason he despoiled,
Plucked out my wit, my sense confused;
All struggles to escape he foiled
And with foul tortures me abused.

“Base slave turned master insolent,
Full of deep treacheries unforeseen,
Forever on thy malice bent,
Thou 'rt but a rogue, thou varlet keen!

“Better that thou hadst never brought
Thine earlier service to my knee,
Than such mad havoc to have wrought,
Within my household beating me.

“Thou art a child that scatterest brands
And criest ‘I am but one in sport!’
Thou scorchest lives with reckless hands
And keepest ruin at thy court.”

He reft my hands of strength, and bent
My fearless heart to timid woe;
He filled me with sad discontent
And carking cares that lovers know.

Now in his ruthless power held fast
I mourn my former free delight,
When heaven and earth before me past
A gay procession of delight.

Who shall my pleasure me restore?
Who loose me from this minion's thrall,
Make dear the things dear once before
And to loved labors me recall?

The sun disturbs me in the sky,
At star-crowned night I pout and swear,
The bright June day is all awry,
The world a tedium everywhere.

O time most cruel, life in vain!
We are the sport of acrid fates,
We fain would ride in Charles's wain,
But in the ditches find our mates.

The world goes rushing on, nor recks
Of all the wild despair we feel;
When we lie down and die, she decks
Our graves with green beneath her wheel.

"I hate you, life! you, time, I hate!
I have no patience with your ways;
Your children you excoriate,
Keeping your placid smile always.

"And you, O Love, most brutal god!
A serf turned master coarse and bold—
Let others praise your slightest nod,
To me you are a fiend untold!

"You lured me to your festal board,
You kindled hope with countless lies,
And where you promised bliss, drew sword
And slew me with your treacheries."

We are the prey of blood and nerve,
High reason holds but fleeting power;
With her we strive to live and serve
The best of nature every hour.

When lo! a riot of the sense
At some fair face, some gracious mien,
Fills the calm soul with turbulence,
Bestorming all its moods serene.

Enough made happy but allure
The rest to thinking they shall be;
False lights on reef-bound coasts secure
The greater wreckage on the sea.

Be not seduced, O hapless man!
Scud from the signal lights on shore;
Keep the high seas, nor dream you can
Find land inside the breaker's roar.

For soon, caught in the awful surge,
Tossed to and fro, a wretched waif,
You with your life will scarce emerge
And then will moan that life is safe.

Choose you a wife with judgment cool
To mother children, keep the house;
Live calm, well served, nor like a fool,
Try with thy heart to find a spouse.

SPRING-TIDE

The dogwood heaps its banks of snow
Against green billows of the wood.
On sunny slopes the violets blow,
And dandelions star the sod.

From fruit trees red the blossoms shake
Their perfumes to the balmy air,
Whence bustling bees new honey take
With murmurous rapture everywhere.

The bluebird gay, the small wren pert,
The ruffling sparrows full of fight,
The bobolink with song alert
Fill swamp and orchard with delight.

✓ The hearts of men find pleasure new
In pleasure of the budding spring,
Nor seems life now of sombre hue
✓ Nor life's delight a little thing.

✓ But Nature lends such winsome charm,
Such beauty to the full-orbed day,
That place, nor thought, is left for harm
✓ Or aught that mars our destiny.

APPLE BLOSSOMS

The orchard flings its blossomed sprays
Abroad in generous loveliness,
Whereon the robin blithely sways
And whistles in his russet dress.

Far o'er the hillside swell the flowers
In promise of the opening year,
Oft spangled by sweet April showers
And scenting far the wandering air.

The ploughboy in his furrow stands
With heart in rapture lost I guess,
The large-eyed oxen turn his lands
With equal hearts of happiness.

Both drink of Nature's generous wine
Served freshly at her vernal feast,
Nor either dreams that powers divine
Resent their careless naturalness.

Little they muse on deadly sin
Or blot the time with duty's pain,
Content enough if they can win
Another day from this day's gain.

LOVE AND WEALTH

Love and Wealth at daggers drawn
Stood debating loud one day,
Love complaining of the frown
Wealth put on his pleasant way.

Love with pouting lip cried out:
"You 're a pretty cad to know;
All your darlings round about
Flout me with my twanging bow.

"Doubtless you are quite a swell,
Never keep low company,
But for all, I know full well
You would better go with me.

"Friends of yours get into court
Wretched mid their luxuries,
Whom you married as in sport
With reluctant perjuries.

"Me you did not even ask
To their costly nuptials gay,
As were yours the only task
Even for a wedding day.

"But I 'd have you just to know
Something better I can lend
Than the sorry outward show
Which seems to be your paltry end."

Then Love stopped and fixed a shaft
To his string and let it fly
Where upon the corner laughed
A ruddy shop-boy bright of eye.

Gazing at him was a maid
On the crossing drawing near,
Saucy, pert, and unafraid,
Fit to be his sweetheart dear.

Feeling then a sudden smart,
Quick he ran to take her hand,
Quickly asked her for her heart,
Which she gave to his command.

Wealth with tossing head of scorn
Pointed towards the amorous pair—
"See," he said, "what wights forlorn
You are pushing to despair.

"Beggars born that have no chance
Save to toil and live like beasts,
Better 't were to let them dance
Single through life's meagre feasts.

“You are always making lovers
Quite regardless of all right,
Satisfied if o’er them hovers
Your fool’s fiction of delight.

“I am prudent, and I never
Knit my striplings till I ’m sure
They can live well, howsoever
Lesser matters they secure.

“And if you are missing off
At the nuptials that I make,
Do not think we are so soft
As to hold it a mistake.

“Your mates too in court are seen,
No more happy than are mine;
Lovers’ quarrels oft have been
Most unseemly—they are thine.”

Gave then Wealth his hand a toss,
Glanced towards Love with freshened scorn:
“You are childish, thinking dross,
As you call my gold, forlorn.

“But your couples often swear
When they find an empty purse;
Scarcely then do they forbear
To speak ill of you and curse.

“Half the world of babes is made
Whom your raptures bring to be,
Only like sweet flowers to fade
Through your insufficiency.”

Wealth was dressed in latest mode,
Wore an eyeglass at his eye,
Which did poor Cupid sadly goad
Who wore nothing, wet or dry.

Yet was Love so radiant,
Sweet of flesh, and lithe of limb,
With caressing manner blent,
Wealth himself did envy him.

Just then at the curb-stone stayed
A carriage drawn by dappled grays,
Out from which there stepped a maid
Lovely as the morning's rays.

Eighteen summers had she seen;
Fresher was she than a rose;
Rich she also must have been,
Judging from her perfect clothes.

Quickly Wealth took off his hat,
Bowed him low complacently;
Cried to Love, "Can you win that,
With your dimpled smile so free?"

Love said naught, but with a shaft,
As the maiden glanced around,
Touched her arm, as towards her laughed
A broker's clerk on business bound.

Money had he none, but sent
Youth's sweet greeting from his eyes,
Which, aided by Love's arrow, rent
Way through all her fineries.

"Now" cried Love, "let 's see you take
That rich maid from my poor boy;
Ne'er again will she awake
But to dream of him with joy."

"Oh," sniffed Wealth, "a passing glance!
Quick 't will fade, and be forgot.
My coy maidens do not dance
Into love without a thought."

But sly Love had swiftly shot
To each heart an arrow true:
"Now, my friend, they 'll surely wed
Whatever you and yours may do."

Then to Wealth, "Ta, ta" he said,
Mounting on his painted wing,
Thus from controversy fled,
Doves convoyed his vanishing.

Wealth remained to see the lad
Drawing near the gilded maid,
Felt a shiver far from glad,
That she seemed not more afraid.

When he spoke, responded she;
Both said words that touched the heart;
Handsome, virile, ardent, he,
Well as lover played his part.

When they wed one jocund day,
Love and Wealth were bidden both
Wealth assisted with dismay,
Love with radiance, nothing loth.

Going from the church, Love ran,
Took Wealth sweetly by the arm,
Whispered, "Now you'll see this bann
Turn out free from every harm."

"Better far than most of yours,
On which you so dote and puff,"
Wealth replied, "It may be so,"
Shaking Love off in a huff.

The pair lived long, the lad was clever,
Made his way, and reached the top,
Till her friends cried, "Did you ever!
How much better than a fop!"

Wealth and Love when mollified
Each confessed 't was better so,
When both invited had replied,
"We will both to church with you."

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

"Friendship is longer-lived than love,
Is stronger, saner, wiser far,"

She said, and spread
Her restless fan against the air,
Cooling her cheek and eyes above;
The while, a smile
Wreathed round her lips its subtle wile.

But in that smile Love played and danced,
Snapping his fingers at his foes:

His spell too well
He knew to blanch at words like those,
Secure of power where'er he glanced;
Then cried, aside,
"Short-lived am I? Thou 'st never tried."

UNREST

We wait for time's desired event
While days creep forward into years;
The hair turns gray, but sweet content
Comes not till death discharges fears.

Strange turmoil of the living soul
That never can arrange its state
To gain the restless moving goal
Though one rise early and toil late.

But this is life, to feel desires,
Perennial motion urgent still,
As wave crowds wave against the byres,
As wind piles sand upon the hill.

But why should mix such discontent
With evolution's constant drift,
And moving forward still be blent
With sullen hatred at the shift?

Why should not nature tempt us more,
With pleasure's lure to higher things;
Make new experience less a bore
Instead of maddening with its stings?

Now nations large lie down distressed,
Live like poor brutes exposed to chance,
Because poor nature at her best
Dispirits them from all advance.

But there is naught for man to choose,
He still must lift his pack and go—
A pedler heavy-laden, whose
Grim needs scourge forward midst of woe.

APHRODITE

Thou conquering goddess fair
Who still dost take the air
 Mid modern men,
Thou hast not lost thy charm
Nor has thy cheek known harm,
 Within our ken.

Thou reignest o'er dress coats
And forms swathed to their throats,
 With the same ease
As o'er the gauzier folds,
And forms half-nude—the molds
 Of ancient Greece.

Never shall faint thy power
Whate'er betide the hour,
 Since all delights
In thy white hand concealed
Are to thy serfs unsealed
 Neath starry lights.

LOVE'S PERIL

"All, all for love" they cried and stood
At the altar side by side,
She just too sweet for anything, he
Full of manly strength and pride.

But neither had a cent and so,
Come to living, they could get
But a wretched place to live,
For a few poor dollars let.

Love looked in and saw them house,
Staid a month or two, then said,
"Let the beggar hunt his louse,
I 'll go where I 'm better fed."

When they looked across the hearth,
Saw love gone and cupboard bare,
She outbreathed a doleful sigh,
He began to scold and swear.

Maidens fair and young men bold,
Think a little e'er you fling
All your fortunes on a throw
Which may double cyphers bring.

THE BAT

Gray minion of gray twilight! Thou
Art scarcely bird or beast, I trow,
Made up, Dame Nature knoweth how.

Thy wings unfeathered curiously
Oar swiftly through the airy sea,
No flyer claiming kin to be.

Thy zigzag flight were poorly meant
To journey far, were that thy bent,
But doubtless serves thy snug intent.

Thou winged triangle haply sped
From Euclid's musty page and dead,
Geometry incarnated!

Thou living mathematic queer
Outlining problems on the air!
Art fashioned thus to give us fear?

Art creature of the evil one
Men thought thee once? No! that's undone
Since elf and imp alike are gone.

And men see now a freakish mouse
That with his trim ambitious spouse
Hath taken wing and fled the house,

To wag beneath the soft-eyed stars
O'er fen and forest, streams and scaurs,
Unseen of foes that daylight bears.

How fares thy life in nature's stress?
Holds she thee in a sad duress,
Or keeps thee glad with fearlessness?

In thy small breast do hopes and fears
Perplex thine unimportant years
With smiling hours, with weeks of tears?

Like men thou must thy quick race run
Beneath the stars, beneath the sun,
And sleep when thy short stint is done.

Where maybe thou dost suffer less,
And know more of pure happiness
Than those who greater powers possess.

Hail and farewell, night-wanderer!
Whose wee, weak eyes the dark prefer;
Thou hast mid men thy congener!

THE SQUIRREL AND THE LION

A squirrel sat blinking
And what he called thinking,
On the edge of a limb,
Of his life made precarious
By foes most nefarious,
That sought for a meal on him.
He wondered if 't would not
Improve his distrest lot,
If fortune had made him
A lion and bade him,
Be free from his perils so grim.

A lion lay near him,
So big one would fear him
And drowsily snoring
As if tired of roaring,
Yet wishing creation
Would send him a ration.

And rousing from slumbers
He thought of the numbers
Who hunted his skin,
Which he held a sin;
And seeing the squirrel,
Wished his little peril
Were the cost of existence to him.
"For no one," he said,
"Could seek squirrel dead,
So petty he is and so slim."

So the small and the great
Find fault with their fate,
The weakling to power aspiring;
While the lordly bemoans
With infinite groans
His fretted existence requiring
Alertness and anger,
To escape all the danger,
That waits on his coveted bones

Both lion and squirrel
Have multiform peril,
Since existence is nettled with ills.
So small folk and great folk
Are galled with life's tough yoke,
And discomfort's porcupine quills.

The lion lived to green old age,
The squirrel to be gray,
Nor either suffered his presage
Ere he had passed away.

FELIX AMOR

Love is the fire at life's high feast.
It burns the blood like mantling wine;
It shows the lover at his best,
It shows the loved—divine.

The winds may blow, the floods may pour,
The thunder crash across the skies,
But clear above the tempest's roar
Love sings the song that never dies.

Long live brave love that swiftly rides
From farthest plains to seek his fate;
Nor asks what other thing betides
When love he finds inviolate.

Oh, fresh as dewdrops, sweet as clover
Fall the kisses of the lover,
Drowning still all fear of sorrows
In flush hopes of blest to-morrows.

THE WHITE FLEET

1893

Silent, serene upon an even keel,
Our mail-clad squadron glides within the bay,
Majestic guardian of our nation's weal,
Gilded and burnished by the lord of day;
The wave upbears its ships with glittering pride,
As pleased to show their splendor on its tide.

White as a flock of swans, they swim the main,
The hue of peace their chosen livery;
As were their hearts of gracious burdens fain,
Yet are their decks stowed with war's deviltry,—
With engines to destruction consecrate,
Devised for purposes of sheerest hate.

Yet though their bulwarks war's leashed guns embay,
With hearts ferocious as wolves of the wood,
Theirs rightly is a snowy hue to-day;
Since our republic beats its swords so good
To ploughshares better, it is time to dight
Our men-of-war in saintly robes of white.

Yet 't were indeed a braver sight, though fell,
To see them flashing in hot battle's bale,
To hear the shrieking of the hurtling shell,
And huge balls dropping in an iron hail,
While glaring sulphur-clouds of rancor flew
Across the fire-lit reaches of the blue.

That were a sight to kindle warriors' joy,
To stir a man's nerves into rapture mad;
To rouse the Berserker fury in a boy,
And make red carnage seem a duty glad;
Such temper dwells in mortals passionate
To have their wills, or forfeit life to fate.

Then might one hear the groans of men, nor care;
Might see the hot blood flow without a sigh;
Might hang upon the battle's flux and swear
That this were work worth that strong men should die;
Such ardors in the hearts of patriots spring
When country calls to loss and suffering.

And sure 't would be, were foemen at our doors
Threatening our costly cities with the guns
Of hostile cruisers raking ports and shores,
That we should count as dearest of our sons
Who most was dyed in red of battle-stain,
Who most of men in murderous fight had slain.

And they who met these guns in deadly feud
Would find stout souls behind them, dogs of war,
Who 'd gaily put to life-risk flesh and blood
To win or die as fits a gallant tar;
Nor would one flinch so long as mast-head bore
The starry flag above the surges hoar.

'T were but foolhardy to expose our pride
To any blustering rival's haughty spleen!
Better in these well-shotted guns confide
To meet the ever-threatening unforeseen!
Peace-keepers are they, whose thrice-hardened steel
And piled-up shells forestall loud battle's peal.

Impressive symbols of our waxing state,
Strong sentinels of honor in all seas,
In unperturbed tranquillity they wait,
Bold menace to all froward enemies.
For latent thunders in their silence hide
To smite rude foes should angry days betide.

Yet is the day of these sea-tigers done;
States win by finer than steel men-of-war,
Since commerce makes the nobler nations one,
And civil argosies armed frigates bar;
Men crave no more the broadside's furious blast,
Iron-clads by ocean-greyhounds are outclassed.

How far more worthy of a creature sane
To launch rich steamers for the joys of life,
Make seas a highway free for pleasure and gain,
Than redden waves with blood of pleasureless strife;
No more bid laws keep still while arms contend,
But silence arms while mightier laws defend.

Long may our white ships rust untouched of fight,
Homes of fair peace, playhouses of brave men!
Stained of no gore, to citizens a sight,
Saluting all flags on all oceans! Then
Shall still the starry flag that o'er them floats
Speak but long peace from cannons' booming throats.

THE CITY

The river runs to the sea,
To the sea the river runs;
But the city beside her streams
Stands still beneath the suns.

And the people fill her streets,
Fill her streets with a busy throng;
They go their ways to the abyss
While the city still stands on.

The cities men's hands have built
Outlast all their other work;
They stay, though their builders depart,
Whether Athens, Rome, New York.

The country is void and wide,
There is little which life can enhance;
But the city of human pride
Is the measure of man's advance.

MISER

His motto was economy,
He died a millionaire—
If he be gone to glory
May I go elsewhere.

SPENDTHRIFT

His cry was all for pleasure;
He died in want and woe;
He 's buried in the potter's field,
Where may I never go!

MELANCHOLY

The sky is bright, the wind is chill,
The waves lap coldly on the rock,
My yacht tugs hardly at the dock,
My love sits lonely on the hill.

A quarrel sprang between us twain,
A strife respecting naught of weight,
But heavy with impending fate,
And now we drift to sea again.

So doth the edge of careless speech
Cut through the nerve and throbbing heart
And shear half-blended souls apart,
Too proud and blind the truth to reach.

Oft we are fools of accidents—
Leaves in the wind of whirling chance;
A day may wreck us, and the dance
Of death begin amid our tents.

THE FICKLE WINDS

How and why do the north winds blow?
They bring the sleet and the drifting snow;
They blight the flowers and the corn arow;
They chill the poor and the old eno';
But who can know
Why and how the north winds blow?

How and why do the south winds blow?
They bring the spring and the gentle rain;
They touch the air with love's sweet pain;
They call the children to field and lane;
But who can know
Why and how the south winds blow?

How and why do the east winds blow?
They bring the storm to the roaring sea;
They hustle the traveller on the lea;
They frighten the cattle and house the bee;
But who can know
Why and how the east winds blow?

How and why do the west winds blow?
They bring the summer's abounding heat,
The breath of the clover, the ripening wheat,
The year's fruition thrown at man's feet;
But who can know
Why and how the west winds blow?

How and why do the love winds blow?
They blow in alley and field and sea;
They blow on high and low degree;
Their blow their rapture to you and me;
But who can know
Why and how the love winds blow?

PHYSICS

What fortune goes
With the turn of a nose;

With dimple of chin
May be all one may win.
To an eye's bright fires
May be given desires,
And a shapely form
Give us love and home,
Or a voice's spell
Bring heaven or hell.
So much of the earth
With the body gets birth.

CIRCE

Love sits about her brow, I swear,
And plays about her yellow hair.
A thousand loves are in her smile,
More in her laughter to beguile.
Her teeth, her lips, her chin enchain
And what she says makes love again.
Yet all is but an outward show,
Her heart knows nothing of love's glow.
Cool as a firefly's light, her fire
But mimics love's unfelt desire.

EXILE

Love put I from me with his gurgling laugh,
His voice of music, flesh so sweet and young,
Because his memories filled my eyes with tears,
My soul with anguish in deep silence wrung.

AT A CONCERT

A pair of strangers entered there,
Who both were young and she was fair,
And he looked well enough indeed,
Yet both were much too young to wed.

But wed they were and newly so,
Which made them flirt unduly, so
They heard no music, bless your heart!
Music from them was miles apart.

They sat and chatted wondrously
As if they came there to be free,
Nor march, nor waltz, nor overture,
Beethoven, Liszt, nor Bach could lure.

I went for music: I am daft
For the sweet notes of that sweet craft;
Love Wagner, Mozart, Verdi—all,
And frown on those who mar their thrall.

But yet this couple caught my eyes;
They seemed so gleeful, in surprise
I clean forgot the programme score
Watching their childish glee before.

What made me sadden at the sign?
Seidl was good, the players fine;
Yet in my eyes the tears did stand
At Siegfried's love-song from the band.

But cross was I when all was o'er—
Old bachelors disturbed wax sore.
I vowed such children were too young
To send abroad o' nights alone.

What ailed me? Was it some quick thought
Of her I loved a few years back,
Who said me nay and cast a blight
Upon the world of my delight?

Oh, no, indeed! I did not care—
Others I knew, and just as fair;
But still I sued for her, and now
I roam the world alone, I know.

And if she had said yes, I swear,
Though she and I were older far,
No sadder had I been I 'm sure
Than this gay pair on bridal tour.

WINE AND LOVE

Fine is the blood of the vine
In wine;
'T is a gift of the gods divine,
Their sign;

It flushes pale cheeks with the red of the roses;
Wreathes a smile round the lip on its beaker that closes;
Of the slave makes a king for the breadth of an hour,
Gay lord of the treasures of pleasure and power;
Sparkling wine!
Juice divine!

What gates are thrown wide by that red hand of thine!

More fine are sparkling eyes, I opine,
Than wine;
Gifts of the gods, that shine
More divine;
Wine of love that gushes from woman's fond eyes
Makes wine of the vine a thing to despise;
It mounts to the brain with a heavenlier fire,
Young hearts with a nobler desire doth inspire;
Glittering wine,
Though divine,
Thou 'rt as water to love, whose wine outfumes thine!

LOVE'S EXCUSE FOR FICKLENESS

Since men are still of fickle minds,
I lend them passions of all kinds;
An hour is dower
Enough for some, and me they bless
For that hour's fill of happiness;
Wouldst rob the mob
Of that short bliss and leave a sob?

Others there are, for whom a week
I save amid the general wreck;
A week they speak
Of raptures, such as ne'er before
Had knocked at their secluded door.
What blame? No shame
If soon they feel no more the flame.

And if the larger natures find
A year of love to please their mind,
 A year is clear
Gain for a life but poor and tame.
You would not have it all the same!
 Such time in chime
Were long indeed—twelve months sublime!

For some the rapture ne'er will die;
'T will crown life's cup and drown grief's sigh;
 Bless ease or stress;
Will make earth heaven for them, and I
Shall be exalted to the sky;
 All men know then
My gifts beyond all other ken.

A WIFE

The love of a lover is dear,
But dearer the love of a wife is,
For the first is afflicted with fear,
The other secure for a life is.

Secure if one wishes it so;
So faithful the heart of a woman
She never will leave him to go
If treated like anything human.

If rudeness or daily neglect
She resents, it should but excite him
In reason to curb the defect,
And then she will surely delight him.

Let the man disposed to complain
That his wife is not to him mated
His lover's attentions again
Renew and find ills placated.

MAN'S FUTURE

O soul! if soul thou art that plumest thy wings
To fly along the dim, uncharted coasts,
Of lands beyond the touch of sensible things,
What hast thou caught with all thy sanguine boasts?

Knowest thou one point within the mists of death,
One single harbor whither thou art bound?
Does any wish to yield his mortal breath
For angel courts, or happy hunting ground ?

The bold in faith still covet no new shore
Enough to shuffle off this masquerade
Of flesh whereof they speak so lightly: more
Would they its often-threatened loss evade.

The ignorant martyrs hastily shed their blood
To ensure their title to a heavenly estate,
But who to-day is bartering earthly good
For all the prizes that the dead await?

For honor, love, or truth, one well might die,
And many a man would readily dislimb
His fleshly form, or ere he would belie
Whatever honor should demand of him.

But for a heavenly crown 't were small reward,
Too small, O soul! thy fancies to abet;
One cannot price thy guesses; 't were absurd
Real gems to sell to buy an amulet.

Therefore, O soul! of thee I crave consent
To leave thy yearnings for the solid good
That waits on those who on earth's toils intent
Secure great profit by their hardihood.

If after death new realms my eyes shall greet,
New duties rise demanding noble deed,
There 'll be enough of time, I wot, to meet
The call that from deep nature shall proceed.

CARPE DIEM

Each morn I rise and think how glad
The breezy hours will dance away;
Each morn new meditations glad
Chase all sad dreams of night away.

I know that men are sick and poor;
I know that children suffer harm;
I know that over street and moor
There rises still some sad alarm.

But who can make the world anew
Relieve all hours of misery?
Shall thrushes cease to fly and sing
Because the mole hath voice nor wing?

Misguided those who call life drear
And moan against its empty days,
And who that cry in terms severe
Against its pleasures. All its ways

To me seem as the ways of God,
Down which in joyous cavalcade
Rich days and months have ever trod,
Had man of all, the best still made.

Fast flitting years their triumph fling
Upon the changing, wilful breeze,
Peculiar splendors flourishing
And crowning all the common leas.

We speak too much of loss and gain,
We think too much of care and woe,
We sigh at sorrow's pattering rain,
Nor teach our hearts to rise and go

From out the dismal, creaking throng
Of life's perpetually roving ills,
And sit its greater joys among,
Which echo 'mid the uplifted hills.

"Things are in the saddle and ride mankind,"
Said Emerson, the sage of Concord town,
Since things increased so much, and made men blind
To thoughts which gave our well-fed sage renown.

But sages know not everything; and he
Perhaps knew not the struggling world so wide,
Or he had written of the times we see.
"Things 'neath the saddle are and mankind ride."

"Hitch your wagon to a star,"
Cries our bright Emerson;
But Charles' wain has not gone far
Since chaos was undone.

HER FAVOR

Yes she is lovely as you say,
Has lovely been for many a day;
Her brunette beauty is not cold
Against that background, red and gold.
Above most women's touch I prize
One vivid glance of those dark eyes.
A favor to me once she did,
For when I wooed her as a kid
She said me nay, and left me free
To wed my sweeter wife you see.

My love has many faults, I know,
As biting wit, and frigid eyes,
For they become her well, as snow
The mountain top whereon it lies.

MOUSE AND MATCH

Mouse and match are small enow
When foregathered in a hole,
Both look harmless as things go,
Both seem quite within control.

Mouse thinks match a morsel choice,
Nibbles idly at its tip,
Scuds with terror when a blaze
Burns his tiny teeth and lip.

Mouse whisks off, but fire burns on,
Burns a house or two and spoils
Family home and fortune won,
Human life with grief embroils.

So one little deed may kindle
Flames within a concord fine,
Furious hatreds quick immingle
With burnt love once held divine.

FLESH AND THOUGHT

Not thy sweet face for all its charm,
Nor thy rich voice for all its song,
Nor yet thy molded hand and arm,
Whose perfect grace have wrought such wrong;

Nor yet that hair of rippling gold
That on thy temples planteth snares,
Nor that smile whose light untold
Blots out the pain of earthly cares,

Shall yet survive the fragile lines
That thee proclaim the choicest fair;
When flesh its beauteous blush resigns,
The word remains that told it rare.

THE WHIPPOORWILL

Dun-coated denizen of loneliest dale,
That ever cri'st in melancholy rote!
Can nothing for thy case enough avail
But thou must 'plain forever in one note?

And yet, I wot, thy fate is no way worse
Than that of other wild-fowl of the wood,
Thou hast a wife and children not perverse,
Thou findest nature's locker stocked with food.

Why then dost beat the minutes of the night
With "whippoorwill" disconsolate? Is mirth
So alien to thy heart, thou ailing wight!
That thou and sorrow count one hour of birth?

Or has the night, to which thou wailest most,
So swathed thy soul in its perennial gloom,
That like a spirit, pennyless on Styx' coast,
Thou seest no rescue from a mournful doom?

Thou art as silent through the ambrosial hours
Of sunlit day, as if a criminal
Thou wert excluded from the breezy bowers
Where other songsters hymn their madrigal!

But thou art sinless, as thy plumes unstained!
Within thy bosom lurks no secret crime!
Thee heaven's maledictions have not pained,
That thou a penitent shouldst gloom thy time!

Or chauntest thou some bloody hawk's sad dirge
Whose acrid crimes upon its conscience sit,
Which fain would show such sorrow as would purge
Its guilt, till Paradise were oped to it?

Lost stragglers in the empty wilderness
Hearing thy iterate note might droop and die,
So much thy plaintive voice could hope depress
And deepen to despairing misery!

Thy congeners thou hast in human kind
Who ever moan along a prosperous way,
As did foul nature blow with blighting wind
Upon their fortunes through the brightest day!

Their dismal notes will quench the cheeriest lay,
Arrest the song of lark on soaring wing,
Send storms of March across the blithest May,
And chide with frost the opening buds of spring.

Better to mask the piteous face of grief,
Push back all tears, disguise the personal woe,
In others' welfare seek the heart's relief,
And like arbutus blossom 'neath the snow.

TENNYSON

If honey sweeter than sweet clover yields
There be to gather from the earthly fields,
Was not good Tennyson the busy bee
Who knew to suck it out on every lea?

But life is not all honey as 't is found
In pallid privacy's eventless round;
And he but touched its borders, writing well
Of all good things that virtuous men befell.

That never he life's stronger passions sang,
Its deep despairs, crime's vengeance on her own,
Makes that his verses never loudly rang
With notes that stir to swart Othello's tone.

THE ROSEGG GLACIER

Long since the day when hither came a bride—
A bride and groom whose new felicity
Had scarce a week of durance, both o'erjoyed
With such mad pleasure as but once in life
Comes even to favored men, when youth, strength, wealth,
And beauty meet with love and take his hand
And know his utmost rapture, without cloud.
Life lay before them like a pleasure cruise
On one's own cosy yacht in Orient seas.
They here one day in the mere wantonness
Of reckless pleasure went to stroll alone
Upon the smooth-faced glacier blanketed
With snow new-fallen. And what with glorious air,
Bright sun, fair slopes, it seemed as innocent
As any country wold, and brought them wine
Of all delight, till in a sportive chase
He ran before, she following hard behind,
Eyes, cheeks, brows aglow, and laughter on their lips;
But all at once, unwarned, he sank from sight
Like some thin ghost, nor even uttered cry,
While she stood frozen in a blank amaze,
Then ran where he had disappeared and saw
A yawning icy chasm, whose blue-green depths
Peered through no lover showed, but only vacancy.
Her heart stood still with horror, but no swoon
O'ercomes true woman when such crisis falls,
And swiftly grasping the emergency
She called, and called, but getting no response,
Ran to the village, where her frantic cries
Rallied the mountaineers, and led them swift,
As if on wings, to where her lord had fallen.
"As if on wings," ah! yes, but miles are long

And time has swifter wings, whose steady stroke
Bear hours onward as wild pigeons fly;
But those excited villagers made haste—
A pitying haste, that still seemed slow and long,
And reaching once the gulf, used every art
Of rescue known, but ne'er the lost man found,
So deep his dive in that unbottomed crevasse.
And they would then return to their own homes,
But she refused and clung there unconsoled.
But at the last, all broken down with woe,
She, having no more joy or hope in life,
Heard how the glacier might give up its prey
A half a century later,—at its foot.
And, plighted heart and soul to that fond love,
She made her dwelling in the hamlet near,
And every day with piteous industry
Walked up the glacier, following the crevasse,
Her dear lord's sapphire grave,—as slowly down
The hill it crept some scores of annual yards;
While she each day grew older, wan, and sad.

But after forty years—since heedless time was kind—
The wide crevasse, reclosed, had reached its bourne
Hard by the glacier's foot, where day by day
She sat and watched, with love as passionate
As that which held her in that fatal hour.
But that tenacious gorgon at the last
Disgorged its booty to her hungry eyes,
Delivered her husband's body, fresh and young,
Its bones unbroken, all its fair face whole,
And on his lips the smile that graced them when,
With love's light in his eyes, he sank from sight.
Such pity had the ice on sad mortality!
Then one wild cry of joy broke from her soul,

One rapturous thrill drank up her patient life,
She swooned away and fell all pulseless there,
And so was borne—she and her lover reclaimed
Were borne to the near hamlet and her home.
And laid upon the bed she breathed again,
And he!—his corpse was trimmed for burial.

But when, revived, her heart and sense returned,
She saw his beauteous features like a youth's,
So full and sweet the outlines—his blond hair,
Unwasted, his straight form, and then recalled
Her own long vanished beauty, long forgot,
In the weird, wrinkled eld of her sad face,
Her form how withered with her vigil long,
How weather-beaten all her aspect gray,
She felt a second blow as from new death,
Since now her dear lord seemed more sadly lost
Within the gulf of years than in the pit
Whence he had come; and never again
Could that thrice dear companionship, that love
Untarnished, treasured, lived upon so long,
Her heart's sweet treasure unimpaired,
Be knit again between them,—no! not though the morn
Of resurrection should dawn soon, and heaven
Its beauty lend to both. Then shrieking loud,
Crushed by the bitter phantasy, and pang
Of cheated love, she raved against the heavens,
And falling into a hopeless melancholy
Soon passed to that still land where none grow old.



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